



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



3 3433 07606260 7

THE
AMAZING
INHERITANCE
FRANCES R. STERRETT

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

7

20



**THE AMAZING
INHERITANCE**

FRANCES R. STERRETT

By FRANCES R. STERRETT

THE AMAZING INHERITANCE
THESE YOUNG REBELS
NANCY GOES TO TOWN
REBECCA'S PROMISE
JIMMIE THE SIXTH
WILLIAM AND WILLIAMINA
MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN
UP THE ROAD WITH SALLIE
THE JAM GIRL

T 201 G

THE AMAZING INHERITANCE

BY

FRANCES R. STERRETT

AUTHOR OF "THESE YOUNG REBELS,"
"MARY ROSE OF MIFFLIN," "NANCY GOES
TO TOWN," "THE JAM GIRL," ETC.



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK :: 1922 :: LONDON

66342A

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

NOT A
LIBRARY
PROPERTY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO
THE NEW MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY
MIRIAM CONFER MITCHELL

TRANSFER FROM C. G. OCT 1922

THE AMAZING INHERITANCE

I

TESSIE GILFOOLY was a queen.

A queen! Just imagine! It was far more unbelievable to Tessie than it can possibly be to you. She stared at the man who had brought her the amazing news. A queen!

A minute before and Tessie had been only a big-eyed, dreamy salesgirl in the hardware department of Waloo's largest department store, the Evergreen. Mr. Walker, the long, thin head of the department, had just reprimanded her severely because she had given a customer an aluminum saucepan when the customer had asked for an aluminum frying-pan.

"You must pay more attention to what customers ask for, Miss Gilfooly," scowled Mr. Walker.

"She asked for a saucepan," insisted Tessie stubbornly. Tessie was tired of being blamed for the mistakes of other people.

"Well, she wanted a frying-pan," Mr. Walker said, and his tone was short and crisp, like the best pastry. "In the Evergreen, Miss Gilfooly, a customer is to get what she wants. And the customer is always right! We have to make that

The Amazing Inheritance

rule so we'll keep our customers. Don't let this happen again!"

As he walked away two big tears gathered in Miss Gilfooly's blue eyes. The injustice of the world and especially of long, thin Mr. Walker, who would stand by an unreasonable customer instead of by a tired salesgirl, made her sick.

And now she was a queen!

It does sound unbelievable. But after all you need not lift your black or your brown or your yellow eyebrows and say it is impossible. Far more impossible stories appear in your newspaper every day. Just this morning there was a tale of a set of china, one hundred and ten pieces, which was stolen from a residence on the River Drive and carried across the Mississippi River into Wisconsin and returned to its owner without one of the hundred and ten pieces being broken or even nicked. To prove this surprising story there were statements from Mrs. Joshua Cabot, who had been robbed, and from Stuttering Jimmie, the robber, who had showed that he was a quick and expert packer. Without the statement of Mrs. Joshua Cabot, easily the leader of the Waloo younger matrons, you never would have believed the tale, but no one could question the word of young Mrs. Joshua Cabot. Whoever made the phrase that truth is stranger than fiction knew exactly what he was talking about for nothing could have been stranger than for a burglar to

The Amazing Inheritance

steal a full set of Wedgewood china or for Tessie Gilfooly to find herself a queen with a real kingdom and some thousands of real subjects.

Only that morning Tessie had grumbled and twisted her face into a most unbecoming scowl because life for her was just a dreary, weary round of work. She found fault with her oatmeal and skim milk because they were not strawberries and thick yellow cream and was just as annoying and disagreeable as a discontented girl of nineteen could possibly be.

"I never have any fun!" she wailed, and her small brother Johnny, who was eating his oatmeal and skim milk as if they were strawberries and cream, looked at her in surprise. What was the matter with old Tessie this morning, anyway? "I never have anything!" went on Tessie passionately. "It isn't fair for some girls to have so much and for me to have nothing at all! Look at Ethel Kingley!" she told Granny fiercely, although she must have known that Granny's eyes, keen as they were, could never penetrate the hundreds of frame and brick and stucco houses which separated the shabby little Gilfooly cottage from the big brick and stucco mansion which housed the Kingleys. "Ethel Kingley has everything in the world, and I haven't anything at all! It isn't fair! It isn't fair! Ethel Kingley's shoes cost more than I earn in a week. She has a new dress every day and I've worn this cheap sateen

The Amazing Inheritance

rag all spring! Ethel Kingley goes to bridge parties and dances! You can read about them in the *Gazette*! And I only go to bed! Ethel Kingley's brother—" The color rushed into her pale face as she spoke of the lordly Bill Kingley, "is the most wonderful man!" Words failed her as she thought of Ethel Kingley's wonderful brother.

"I'm a Boy Scout!" interrupted Johnny, eager to remind her that her own brother, young as he was, was wonderful too.

Tessie sniffed at him and at all Boy Scouts and went on with her grievances. When a quart measure is full it must overflow if anything more is poured into it, and Tessie was just full of grievances. "And Ethel Kingley has heaps of men friends to take her out and give her a good time!"

"You've got Joe," reminded Granny. "A face is a better guide to what a man is than clothes, Tessie Gilfooly! You take my word for it. Joe Cary is one in a thousand. His money's ready the minute it's due, every Saturday night as regular as the clock." For Joe had occupied the front room of the shabby little cottage ever since he had returned from France. "Now look here, my girl!" She regarded Tessie over her spectacles with kind but firm eyes. "It's plain to be seen that you got out of the wrong side of bed this morning. You're old enough to know that there are two kinds of folks in the world, those who have and those who haven't. The good Lord

The Amazing Inheritance

thought best to put you in with the 'haven'ts' and if he didn't give you the brains to climb up to the 'haves' there isn't any use in complaining and fault-finding to me. Here you are, young and healthy and with a nice job at the Evergreen——"

"Selling aluminum!" interrupted Tessie passionately.

"Selling aluminum," Granny repeated firmly. "You know very well that you're a lucky girl to have me and Johnny to look after you and Joe Cary for a friend to take you to the movies and——"

"One movie in two weeks!" exclaimed Tessie indignantly.

"And one more than you deserve when you act like this! You've done enough complaining for one morning, my girl. And if you don't want to be late and have your pay docked you'll take that frown off your face and put on a smile with your hat and run along. And I'll have some nice liver and onions for dinner so you'll have something pleasant to look forward to all day."

A glance at the old clock ticking so patiently on the shelf proved to Tessie that Granny told the truth. She pushed back her chair and rose to her feet, a pathetic, shabby little person with her white face in which the purple shadows made her eyes look big and purple-blue. Her yellow hair was bunched over her ears in the ugly fashion of the day and was really responsible for her tirade,

The Amazing Inheritance

for it had proved unmanageable that morning and almost refused to bunch itself over her little ears. And you know how irritating it is when your hair is unmanageable.

"Granny," she began, and her lip quivered. She was an honest little soul, and she could not go away and leave Granny without some word of apology. "It isn't because I don't appreciate you and all you do for me but it's—it's—" She stopped and looked at Granny with eyes drowned in tears.

"I know," exclaimed Granny comfortingly, and she slipped her arm around the slim figure. "I know! I don't blame you a mite! It isn't fair for good little things like you to have to go without fun and pretties. Every girl has a right to be a queen for a while, and it's remembering the days when she was queening it that help to make the other days bearable. Yes, my lamb, old Granny understands, and she don't blame you a mite. But just you wait! The good Lord'll get around to the Gilfoolys some day, and then see what you'll get. You're a good little girl if you ain't that wonderful Miss Kingley!" And she hugged the good little girl and sent her away. "No, it ain't fair," she repeated as she waved her hand from the door.

"What ain't fair?" asked Johnny, who was eating Tessie's discarded oatmeal and skim milk.

"Life," Granny told him thoughtfully. "Life

The Amazing Inheritance

never seems fair to young eyes, Johnny. It's only when you're old and wear glasses that you can see maybe it isn't as bad as you thought it was."

Life seemed anything but fair to Tessie as she stood among the aluminum, smarting at the unjustness of Mr. Walker and with her eyes filled with tears. Before the tears fell on her cheeks she heard a man behind her black sateen back ask doubtfully:

"I beg your pardon, but can you tell me where I'll find Miss Teresa Gilfooly?"

Tessie flirted her hand across her eyes and swung around to stare into the smiling face of a very good-looking young man. She stopped thinking that the world was unjust and discovered that it was showing a kindly partiality to one Teresa Gilfooly when such a good-looking young man was asking for her. What could he want? The only way to hear was to ask.

"I'm Tessie Gilfooly," she said shyly and pinkly, and when Tessie was pink and shy she was adorable.

The good-looking young man seemed surprised and pleased. Perhaps he had thought that big fat Mrs. Slawson was Teresa Gilfooly. "No!" he said, as if he could not believe that she was slim little Tessie. "I've some good news for you!" And he smiled radiantly. There was some fun in carrying good news to a pretty girl. And such good news! He gave it to her all in

The Amazing Inheritance

one piece. He did not believe in breaking the good news into small portions. "You're a queen!" he exclaimed. "Queen Teresa of the Sunshine Islands!" And he grinned. It made a pleasant break in the day's work to tell a big-eyed girl that she was a queen. It turned law into melodrama—very nice melodrama.

"What—what!" stammered Tessie. She put her hand on the table behind her for support, and she looked at the messenger suspiciously. Was he making fun of her? She had studied geography, but she had never heard of any Sunshine Islands. Have you? No wonder Tessie looked at Gilbert Douglas with suspicion.

But there was no fun in Bert's face. There was pleasure and importance and satisfaction and possibly just a wee bit of envy, but there was not a bit of fun as he went on to explain that the death of Tessie's Uncle Pete had removed her from the ranks of the proletariat and elevated her to a throne. Her Uncle Pete had run away to sea when he was sixteen years old. For several years letters came to Granny with strange stamps on the upper right-hand corner of the envelopes and then communication ceased. For twenty-five years there had been no word from Uncle Pete. And he had been King of the Sunshine Islands! Now he had died and left his kingdom to the eldest child of his only brother, John Gilfooly. The oldest child of John Gilfooly was Tessie Gilfooly.

The Amazing Inheritance

A queen! With a throne and a crown and everything! Tessie's brain reeled. She felt faint.

"You come over to the office—Marvin, Phelps and Stokes," suggested Bert, who had come from the office of Marvin, Phelps and Stokes to carry the good news to Tessie and who had never had an errand he liked any better. "Mr. Marvin will tell you all about it."

"Oh, I couldn't come now," faltered Tessie, pinching herself to make sure that she was in the hardware department of the Evergreen and not dreaming in her bed. "I don't get away until half-past five."

"I guess you could get away all right," laughed Bert. But when Tessie shook her yellow head and solemnly assured him that Mr. Walker was awfully strict and never let the girls go a minute before half-past five he laughed again and said all right. He would tell Mr. Marvin that she would be over at half-past five. "Queen Teresa," he said in a voice quite full of admiration and approval, as he went away.

For some time Tessie had been conscious that Mr. Walker had been casting disapproving glances in her direction. Tessie knew—all the girls in the Evergreen had been told—that they were not to talk to their gentlemen friends during working hours. Before nine and after half-past five they could do as they pleased, but from nine until half-past five they could only talk to custom-

The Amazing Inheritance

ers. And this man with Tessie Gilfooly had not bought so much as a dish mop. He had not even asked to see any aluminum. Mr. Walker knew. It was outrageous!

But before he could swoop down on Tessie and tell her just how outrageous it was another man approached the table on which aluminum saucepans were so attractively arranged and behind which Tessie was standing with a white face and big, unbelieving eyes. If she let go of the table Tessie knew she would fall right to the floor.

This newcomer was as strange a figure as Mr. Walker had ever seen in the basement of the Evergreen. He was short and fat and with a skin that was not brown nor yellow nor red, but an odd blending of the three colors. He wore a loose blue denim blouse and trousers which flapped about his bare feet. But it was his head which made Mr. Walker's eyes bulge, for only in the pages of the *National Geographic Magazine*, which he looked at every month in the employees' rest-room, had Mr. Walker ever seen such a head. The coarse black hair was frizzed and stiffened until it stuck straight out from the scalp and was adorned with shells. The man's nose was tattooed in red and blue and a string of shells hung around his neck. Altogether he was the strangest figure Mr. Walker had ever seen in the department, and he wondered what on earth he would buy. He looked like a foreigner of some sort.

The Amazing Inheritance

Mr. Walker was taking a course in business psychology in the Evergreen night school, and he saw the advantage of the study now as he quickly labeled the stranger a native of some foreign country.

The native walked up to Tessie and raised his hand authoritatively. "Miss Teresa Gilfooly?" he said in a lisping voice and with a strange intonation which made Tessie step back and stare at him.

She nodded. She simply could not speak.

"Queen Teresa!" murmured the native rapturously. He fell on his knees before Tessie and pressed the hem of her short skirt to his forehead. "Queen Teresa!" he boomed, and his head touched the floor beside Tessie's shabby little pumps.

If Tessie was startled you can imagine Mr. Walker's surprise. He started forward with righteous indignation. He would not have such goings-on in his department. Not for a minute! But he had to stop and adjust a matter with a customer, and when at last he reached Tessie the native was humbly backing away from her into the elevator, and Tessie was staring after him with a strange look on her face.

"Come, come, Miss Gilfooly!" snapped Mr. Walker. "I can't have this! You can't have your gentlemen friends down here! I can't have

The Amazing Inheritance

men falling on their knees before the clerks in my department!"

"What's up, Walker?"

And there stood the hero of Tessie's dreams, young Mr. Bill, the only son of old Mr. William Kingley, the owner of the Evergreen. Mr. Bill was learning the business from the ground up and so was in the basement as a floorwalker. Tessie had never seen a man like Mr. Bill, not even on the moving-picture screen. She lived in the hope that some day he would speak to her, would stop and ask, perhaps, how sales were; but never once had Mr. Bill so much as said good morning or good evening to her. He had never seemed to see her. And now he was looking—actually looking—at her! and asking Mr. Walker what was up. It was plain to everyone in the basement that *something* was up.

Mr. Bill looked inquiringly from Mr. Walker to Tessie. Mr. Walker's face was all frowning disapproval, while Tessie's face was all flushed with unbelieving wonder. Of the two, Tessie's face was by far the more attractive. Mr. Bill looked at it again.

"Miss Gilfooly, Mr. Bill," began Mr. Walker, sure of his ground, "was breaking the rules. One of her gentlemen friends was on his knees to her not five minutes ago in this very department, beside the aluminum there!" And he pointed out the exact spot to Mr. Bill.

The Amazing Inheritance

"He said I was a queen," faltered Tessie, eager to explain why the store rule had been shattered. She could not believe the amazing statement and so she did not speak firmly, as a queen should speak. She dared to raise her eyes to the godlike Mr. Bill—at least to Tessie Mr. Bill was godlike.

"And he was right!" declared Mr. Bill impulsively. Gee! what big blue eyes the girl had! He had never seen such eyes in the face of any girl, and he had seen many, many girls. He had never really looked at Tessie until now. She had been only one of the hundreds of black-gowned figures which filed into the Evergreen every morning, and filed out of the Evergreen every night. But now that his attention was focused on Tessie, he had to see how big and blue her eyes were, how fine her white skin was, how yellow her hair, and how slim and well poised her little body! Really, her gentleman friend was right, he thought. She was a queen. He grinned, although such a shattering of a cherished and important rule should have been met with a black frown.

"Mr. Bill!" Mr. Walker was shocked. That was no way to reprove a law-breaking employee.

"I don't mean that kind of a queen," murmured Tessie, tremulously conscious to her very toes at having Mr. Bill agree that she was a queen. "But a real queen—of the Sunshine Islands, you know! In the Pacific Ocean," she

The Amazing Inheritance

added hurriedly, for Mr. Bill had looked at Mr. Walker with a significance and a regret which were as plain as print. And she hurriedly told them of Uncle Pete who, unknown to his family, had reigned over the Sunshine Islands for almost twenty years.

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed Mr. Bill. There was astonishment, amazement in his voice which made all the customers and all the sales-girls who heard it turn in his direction, and feel sorry for little Tessie Gilfooly. It sounded as if Mr. Bill just would not believe the yellow-haired salesgirl could have committed the awful deed which had been discovered.

"Upon my word!" stuttered Mr. Walker more elegantly. He did not know how to treat this situation. There was not a word in all the Evergreen rules on how to reprimand an employee if she neglected her work when she was told that she was a queen. Mr. Walker tugged at his mustache and stared stupidly at the culprit.

"Well, I'll be darned!" cried Mr. Bill again, and he too, stared at blushing Queen Teresa.

Tessie nodded. "That's the way I felt," she confessed, and again two big tears gathered in her eyes. Tessie, like long, thin Mr. Walker, felt quite unequal to the situation.

It was Mr. Bill who took command and showed that he was a true son of the Evergreen chief. "Come," he said quickly. "We must go and tell

The Amazing Inheritance

father. Can you believe it? Imagine finding a queen down here in the basement of the Evergreen! Come along!" And he took Tessie's hand and led her to the elevator.

Tessie almost swooned. But faint and excited as she was she clung to Mr. Bill's strong right hand.

"Oh, the poor girl!" murmured the customers, who watched them. "I suppose she has been impudent or stealing or something. What will they do to her? Did you say these stewpans were fifty-nine cents?"

II

TESSIE had never crossed the threshold of Mr. Kingley's sacred office. She had never dreamed of crossing it, and she hung back when Mr. Bill threw open the door.

"Dad!" cried Mr. Bill, a trifle breathlessly. "Listen to this! You'll never believe it!"

There was an excitement in his voice which made his father, busy with Miss Norah Lee who was on the Evergreen publicity staff, look up from the sketches and copy they were studying. And when he saw his only son hand-in-hand with a pink-cheeked, big-eyed, bareheaded girl in a black sateen frock, he feared the worst.

"Bill!" he exclaimed harshly. He rose to his feet and glared at his only son. "How dare you?"

He changed his tone completely when he heard the story. His eyes fairly bulged as he stared at Queen Teresa who stood modestly beside Mr. Bill. For once in his life Mr. William Allison Kingley seemed at a complete loss for words. Nothing like this had ever happened before in the Evergreen, and so it was not surprising that Mr. Kingley, like Mr. Walker, was unprepared. It takes youth like Tessie's and Mr. Bill's to accept such stupendous events unquestioningly.

The Amazing Inheritance

Youth naturally believes in fairies, and if you really do believe in fairies, why—anything—everything—is possible.

"What a chance for some gorgeous publicity!" Norah Lee murmured. She had risen, too, and was staring at Tessie as if she had never seen a black-frocked salesgirl before, and as if she saw her now as so many columns of print on the front page of the *Gazette*.

An odd smile touched Mr. Kingley's mouth, and at once he was himself again. Like a well-known Queen of England, Mr. Kingley had a word engraved upon his heart—and that word was Evergreen. Mr. Kingley lived and breathed for the Evergreen. Every thought, word and deed was for the Evergreen, first and last. He went to bed at night that he might get up in the morning to work for the Evergreen. He passionately envied his son, because Mr. Bill was just beginning his career in the Evergreen, and so might naturally expect a long life of service to the big store. He admired his wife and daughter because they were clothed and nourished by the Evergreen. Just for a flash, perhaps for the only time in his life, when he saw his son and Tessie together, hand-in-hand, he had forgotten his idol; but Norah Lee's impulsive murmur pulled him down on his knees to it again.

"Of course. That's just what I was going to say!" He seemed irritated because Norah had

The Amazing Inheritance

already said it. "I heartily congratulate you, Miss Gilfooly—or should I say Queen Teresa?" He smiled benevolently at the queen as he took her hand and solemnly shook it. "You might send for the photographer, Miss Lee, and arrange to have some pictures taken of Miss Gilfooly at the aluminum—was it?—receiving the news of her—of her accession to the throne of the Sunshine Islands. It sounds quite like a romance, doesn't it? And you say you have heard nothing from your Uncle Pete—King Peter, I should say—for twenty-five years?" he asked, as Norah disappeared with a backward look of incredulous wonder at Tessie.

"No, sir." Tessie spoke softly. She had a pleasant voice, inherited from her Irish ancestors. It sounded exceedingly pleasant and musical to Mr. Kingley, and to Mr. Bill, too. "Not for twenty-five years. He ran away to sea when he was sixteen and my grandfather was awfully cross. He said he would come to no good end, but Granny said a man could make a living on the sea as well as on the land."

"And your grandmother was right!" Mr. Kingley seemed delighted that Tessie's grandmother had spoken true words. "A king! Bless me! It is romantic!" He sounded almost envious of Tessie's romance. "Do you know anything about these Sunshine Islands?" He seemed to thirst

The Amazing Inheritance

for details. "Bill, push forward that chair for Miss Gilfooly."

Tessie gave Mr. Bill a shy little smile as she sank into the big chair he pushed forward. Of all the unbelievable things which had happened, this was about the most unbelievable. Imagine sitting in Mr. Kingley's sacred office for a little chat with Mr. Kingley and Mr. Bill! Tessie's head whirled, but she managed to tell them in her soft, pleasant voice that she really knew very little about the Sunshine Islands, but that she would have to resign her position in the Evergreen, because she would have to go to her new kingdom. She spoke a little regretfully of leaving the Evergreen, and Mr. Kingley understood perfectly. He knew he would hate to leave the store even for a throne. Tessie was to see her lawyer at half-past five.

"After hours," she hastily told Mr. Kingley, so that he would know that she was not going to take advantage of her new honor and ask any favors.

"Faithful little thing," beamed Mr. Kingley. "You'll make a good queen. And you're going to the islands at once? Not alone, I hope?"

"My brother John will go with me. He's a Boy Scout!" It would have cheered Johnny's heart to have heard the pride in Tessie's voice.

"But you will need more support than a Boy Scout. The natives of those Pacific islands are

The Amazing Inheritance

cannibals!" Mr. Kingley was shocked to think that Tessie contemplated going to them without an army to aid her. "At least, I read somewhere once that they were cannibals," he said hurriedly when Mr. Bill looked at him in surprise because he *did* know something about the Pacific islands. He flushed slightly and seemed annoyed.

"Johnny's a good Boy Scout," insisted Tessie. "And Granny will go with us, of course. And the cannibals are reformed, Mr. Kingley. Uncle Pete didn't allow them to eat anybody!"

"I should hope not! Bless me! This is strange! I never expected anything like this to happen in the Evergreen. I suppose the newspapers will give us the front page for such a story. I wonder what the Bon Ton and the Mammoth will say! The world, as well as Waloo, will be interested." He was forgetting Tessie in his delight in the situation, for, as has been said, he was the owner of the Evergreen before he was any one else. "I don't suppose, Miss Gilfooly," he said slowly, as if he were following a train of thought which was dashing through his mind, "I don't suppose you would want to hold a little sale here some day soon, after the *Gazette* has published the story? Of aluminum, perhaps? I mean—" as his son gave a shocked exclamation, "Dad!"—"for one of the charities of the Sunshine Islands? It would help both of us. But that can be arranged later. I don't deny it would help the Evergreen as much

The Amazing Inheritance

as it would increase, say—the shoe fund of your new kingdom.”

“If it would help you, Mr. Kingley, I’d be glad to do it,” Tessie told him obligingly, and she glanced reprovingly at Mr. Bill, who snorted scornfully.

“Help me!” Mr. Kingley laughed and beamed at her with more satisfaction than he could put in words. “Why every woman in town would want to buy a piece of aluminum if a queen would sell it to her,” he declared. “But we can talk of that later. We’ll keep in touch with you—in close touch. And now, suppose you let Bill take you home or to your lawyer’s?”

“I don’t want to ask any favors,” Tessie managed to stammer, although her heart began to thump unmanageably. Imagine Mr. Bill taking *her* home!

“It’s a pleasure to grant them.” Mr. Kingley rose to his feet again and bowed to her. “After you’ve had your picture taken, Bill will go with you to your lawyer’s. Help her all you can, Bill,” he told his son. “She was one of us, you know, one of the Evergreen family, and we must help her.”

“I will,” promised Mr. Bill. “I’ll stay right with her. Come on, Your Majesty!” He grinned at Tessie. “It sounds like a joke,” he said with the frankness of a member of the family.

Tessie raised her eyes and smiled at him. “It

The Amazing Inheritance

isn't a joke," she said slowly. "If it had been a joke, that native with the funny hair and the tattooed nose would never have given me this, would he?" And she opened her left hand which she had held tightly closed, and showed them a pearl as big as a marble. It was threaded on some sort of grass or vegetable fiber and caught in a network of the same lacelike filament.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Kingley, who had never seen a pearl as large as a marble before. He touched it with his fingers to make sure that he really saw one now. "Do you suppose it is real?"

"It's real!" nodded Tessie. "And it belongs to the King, or the Queen, of the Sunshine Islands. I couldn't be the queen if I didn't have it," she told him, and her eyes were big with wonder, that she was a queen at all.

Mr. Kingley stopped looking at the pearl to look at Tessie. "Imagine giving it to you without proper authority, papers, identification, you know!" It was most unbusinesslike to his businesslike mind. He could not imagine such a procedure. When he did business he had the papers very carefully drawn up before anything passed from hand to hand. Evidently that was not the way affairs were conducted in the Sunshine Islands. "Simple people, aren't they? It must be worth a great deal of money!" He eyed the pearl with the respect one gives to what is worth

The Amazing Inheritance

a great deal of money. It reminded him of something else. "Have you any idea, my dear—I mean, Miss Gilfooly," when Mr. Kingley felt as kindly toward Tessie as he did, it was hard to keep the more informal term from his lips, "what the value of your new kingdom is?"

"The lawyer said the islands were worth hundreds of thousands," Tessie murmured bashfully.

"Dollars?" gasped Mr. Kingley, his eyes bulging again.

"Pounds," corrected Tessie, unconsciously icing the cake she offered Mr. Kingley for inspection. "That's more than dollars, isn't it? I think that's pretty good," she added with innocent pride.

"Good!" He choked over the word. "Take care of her, Bill! Take good care of her," he urged. "My soul, but this is splendid and romantic! I was always interested in romance. I never could have built up the Evergreen as I have if I hadn't been romantic. To think of finding a queen in our basement! Take good care of her, Bill!"

"I will," Mr. Bill promised again. He was far more impressed by Tessie's big blue eyes and the enchanting color in her cheeks than he was by the number of pounds she had just received. Gee, but she was a queen all right! A peach of a queen! "Come on, Miss Gilfooly, and I'll take you home." He drew a quick breath as he discovered that he wanted to have her to himself.

The Amazing Inheritance

He did not want to share her even with his father, who was beaming so benevolently.

"After the picture is taken," reminded Mr. Kingley, faithful to his motto—"Business first." "After the picture is taken. And if there is anything you want in the store, Miss Gilfooly, anything in the way of frocks or furbelows," what he really had in mind was a coronation robe but he did not put the thought in words, "just help yourself. Your credit is good with us. I'll see you again, Queen Teresa." And he laughed and took her hand and shook it. "Perhaps you would like me to put your jewel in the safe?"

"I want to show it to Granny." Tessie closed her fingers over the pearl. "She'll be interested because Uncle Pete wore it. I'll take good care of it," she promised.

"Do!" he begged, and he bowed to her again as she went away with Mr. Bill. "My soul!" he declared, as he dropped back in his chair and stared around him at the familiar furnishings which just then did not seem so familiar. "This is going to be a big thing for the Evergreen! Where's Miss Lee? We must tell the world what was found in our basement!"

As Tessie and Mr. Bill left the office they met Joe Cary coming to the office. His hands were full of drawings to be submitted to the critical eye of Mr. Kingley, who refused to let so much as a sketch of a hook-and-eye appear in any paper

The Amazing Inheritance

without his august approval. Joe stopped and stared. What was Tessie Gilfooly doing up here on the office floor with Mr. Bill, when her place was in the basement? He sensed trouble of some sort and took his stand promptly and unquestioningly beside Tessie.

"What's up, Tess?" he demanded, without any preliminary remarks.

Tessie tore her admiring eyes from Mr. Bill and looked at Joe as he stood there, his hands full of sketches, an anxious expression on his face which was half hidden by the ugly green shade that protected his eyes. Above the shade his brown hair was rough and untidy. Mr. Bill's hair was black and of lacquer smoothness. Joe's coat was old and torn. There was a darn at the upper corner of the pocket. Mr. Bill was a sartorial dream—a joy to his tailor. The contrast between Joe and Mr. Bill was so marked that it was painful. Tessie blushed for Joe. But he was her old friend, and she wanted to tell him the news herself.

"Oh, Joe!" she cried. "What do you think? I'm a queen!"

Naturally Joe would not believe such an absurd statement until Tessie had told him about the lawyer and the native with the frizzled hair, and showed him the big pearl, and even then he looked as if he did not believe it.

"It's a joke!" He glared at Mr. Bill as if he

The Amazing Inheritance

suspected that Mr. Bill were responsible for the joke, which he considered was in very bad taste.

"You remember Uncle Pete?" Tessie went on eagerly. "You've heard Granny talk about Uncle Pete?"

"She said he was lost at sea!" nodded Joe, wondering what connection there could be between Granny's vagabond son and this ridiculous statement that Tessie was a queen.

"And all the time she thought he was lost at sea, he was King of these Sunshine Islands! Can you believe it?" Tessie drew a long breath, for she could not believe it. She looked with shining eyes from the godlike Mr. Bill to the worn Joe Cary.

"No, I can't!" Joe said bluntly. "I can't believe a word of it. What do you mean about a lawyer? Wait a minute, Tessie, and I'll go with you."

"Mr. Bill is going with me," Tessie told him quickly and proudly.

Joe looked at Mr. Bill as if he were measuring him body and soul. He might not approve of the result, but he found nothing to which he had the right to object.

"Of course if you would rather have him," he said, and he turned away with his sketches.

Even if he did take her to but one movie in two weeks he was her old friend, and Tessie

The Amazing Inheritance

would not hurt him for the world. She caught his sleeve.

"He offered first," she said, still a bit overcome with the wonder that Mr. Bill had offered at all. "And his father told him to go with me. And he can go without being docked," she explained in a whisper which reached Mr. Bill's ears even if it was low. "You don't want to be docked, Joe."

"I'd rather be docked than have you get into trouble," Joe declared in anything but a whisper. "But it's all right, Tessie. Mr. Bill can look after you and perhaps he does know more about kings and queens than I do. I don't believe in such things, you know."

"I know!" But Tessie drew a long breath which told Joe that she believed in kings and queens. Indeed, she did believe in them!

"What do you mean, Cary?" demanded Mr. Bill. "Don't you believe Miss Gilfooly?"

"Oh, I believe Tessie all right. Tessie knows what I think of her. But I don't believe in kings or queens. The world doesn't need that kind of thing any more. You can see how it's getting rid of them—Russia and Austria and Germany. It may be all right," he admitted slowly, "if Tessie likes it, but personally I don't see how she can. Royalty is as old-fashioned as hoopskirts and belongs to the same period," he finished scornfully.

"You're an anarchist!" Mr. Bill was shocked,

The Amazing Inheritance

and he moved closer to Tessie as if to protect her.

"I'm a progressive!" Joe contradicted him flatly. "I move with the world, and I don't try to hold it back. But that doesn't mean I can't congratulate Tessie because she has a plaything that will amuse her until she outgrows it, although when I come to think of it, the Sunshine Islands sounds a lot like cannibals——"

"Cannibals!" Tessie was indignant. "Uncle Pete wouldn't be king of any cannibals!" The idea! How dared Joe Cary think Uncle Pete would?

"If you'll pardon me, Miss Gilfooly," broke in Mr. Bill, who disliked the tone of the conversation, and who had no patience with Joe Cary's outrageous ideas—pure envy, pure unadulterated envy, he knew was responsible for them—"we were on our way to your lawyer's when we met your friend."

"Oh, yes!" Tessie turned to him eagerly. His voice thrilled her and made her forget to be indignant at Joe. "But first we are going to the basement to be photographed, you know."

"Basement! Photographed!" exclaimed Joe, who could not find head nor tail to this amazing story of Tessie's.

"For publicity for the Evergreen!" Tessie was pinkly important. "Mr. Kingley suggested it, and I'm glad to do anything I can to help the store."

The Amazing Inheritance

Tessie spoke with some emphasis, and she smiled radiantly. It was so thrilling to feel that she could help the Evergreen which had been so patronizing to her, although she was far too tender-hearted to have formulated that thought. She only knew that it was mighty pleasant to do something for the store. Tessie did not have an analytical mind. She took things as they came to her and did not stop to question why they came.

Joe whistled softly. "Publicity," he repeated. "Ye gods and little fishes! Publicity! The Evergreen must be served, eh? Ye gods! Run along, Tess," as she stared at him, "and have your picture taken. I expect it will make mighty good publicity for Mr. Kingley!" And he laughed in a way that puzzled Tessie and made her look at him in dismay. What on earth was the matter with Joe Cary?

III

TESSIE had her picture taken standing beside the table of aluminum while customers were neglected, and Mr. Walker quite forgot to reprove the clerks, who were attentive to but one person—Queen Teresa. He stood on tiptoe himself to watch Tessie.

"We'll have a drawing made of you on a throne and wearing a crown. Joe Cary can do it," promised Norah Lee, who was revelling in this opportunity which had come to her, and which never would have been hers if the advertising manager were not in the hospital for an appendix operation, and if the assistant advertising manager were not serving on a jury. It was her chance to show what she could do, and she knew it. Her eager ears had been quick to hear the loud sharp knock which Opportunity gave at her door. She knew also that the chance would not be hers a minute after the jury was dismissed. "We'll run it in the upper corner of this picture. I think it's wonderful, Miss Gilfooly!" she told Tessie heartily. "And I'm glad the luck has come to you. It wouldn't be half as interesting if it had come to Ethel Kingley—not half! If I can help you in any way don't hesitate to send for me. Mr. Kingley would want me to help you."

The Amazing Inheritance

"Thank you," murmured Tessie gratefully, but she did not look at Norah Lee, she looked at Mr. Bill. "Everybody's so kind," she added chokingly.

"And now I'll take you to the lawyer's!" Mr. Bill looked very handsome and big and brave as he said what he would do. Tessie fairly shivered with ecstasy. "Come on, Miss Gilfooly!"

Tessie glanced back to smile and wave her hand at the clerks, who were so bewildered and amazed that they seemed to have forgotten the price of the most ordinary tinware. Even Mr. Walker stood with his eyes and mouth wide open. They were all deeply and darkly green. "Such luck!" they exclaimed, and they did not see why their uncles could not have died and made them queens of Pacific islands. Why should little Tessie Gilfooly be the one to have all the luck?

That same question was puzzling Tessie as Mr. Bill helped her into his car and took the place beside her.

"All set?" He smiled at her. "Let's go!"

This was almost more disturbing and amazing than to know that she was a queen. To think that at last, after regarding Mr. Bill as the most wonderful and unapproachable man in the world—for Tessie realized that a great gulf yawns between salesgirls and the sons of proprietors—to think that she should actually be riding up the avenue with him in his own car. She could not

The Amazing Inheritance

believe it, but she could like it. She gave a faint little murmur of content, like the purr of a happy kitten. Mr. Bill heard her and looked down.

"Great, isn't it?" he exclaimed with hearty admiration.

It was so very great that Tessie could only nod, and the tears came to her eyes, and the beating of her heart almost choked her. She did not want to go to her lawyer's, she wanted to ride on forever with Mr. Bill. She would far rather ride with Mr. Bill than hear about her kingdom.

The distance from the Evergreen to the office of Marvin, Phelps & Stokes was not long, but Mr. Bill had to make it longer before he found a decent parking place.

"If the cops knew who you were they'd let us stop anywhere," he grinned. "But they don't know, and we don't want any argument."

"Oh, no!" Tessie was congenitally opposed to anything unpleasant.

"Shall I wait for you, or do you want me to come up with you?" The question was only a form, for Mr. Bill would have been cut in inch-pieces before he would wait in the car while Tessie was with her lawyer, hearing about her inheritance. Mr. Bill chuckled. This was vastly more amusing than snooping around the Evergreen basement directing customers and finding fault with clerks.

"Please come with me," begged Tessie. "I

The Amazing Inheritance

want you. I—I feel so alone. Do come along.”

“You bet I’ll come!” exclaimed Mr. Bill, and he led her into the big office building and into the elevator, which whizzed them to a floor which had the name Marvin, Phelps & Stokes all over it. “Lord, what would the people in this elevator say if they knew you were a queen!” he whispered, just before they left the cage, and Tessie laughed and blushed and said “My goodness!” It was so wonderful to have Mr. Bill whisper in her ear that it was not strange that she could only think in breathless exclamations.

The young man who had brought Tessie the good news jumped up as they came in, and he scowled at Mr. Bill before he even smiled at Tessie.

“I’ll tell Mr. Marvin you are here,” he said to Tessie. “What do you want, Bill?” he demanded very ungraciously of Mr. Bill.

“Hello, Bert!” Mr. Bill was most affable. “This is great news you brought to the Evergreen. Dad and I want to help Miss Gilfooly in every way we can, so I came along with her.”

“I guess when she has Marvin, Phelps & Stokes to help her she won’t need any Evergreens,” sniffed Bert rudely. “Come right in, Miss Gilfooly!” He pointedly refrained from offering Mr. Bill an invitation.

But Tessie would not have him left out. “Will you come with me?” she begged prettily. “Of

The Amazing Inheritance

course I know there isn't a thing to be afraid of, but I do feel funny." Her voice quivered.

It brought Mr. Bill to her side at once. He looked triumphantly at Bert, who sniffed again as he led them to the room of the senior partner of the most important law firm in Waloo—in the Northwest.

"Miss Gilfooly!" Mr. Marvin rose to his feet and took her hand. "It was very pleasant for us to send such good news to you," he smiled. "There isn't the shadow of a doubt that you inherit your uncle's property. He left it to the eldest child of his brother John, and we know that you are John Gilfooly's eldest child. But we must comply with the formalities and make everything legal. Undoubtedly you can let us have the record of your birth, and the record of the marriage of your father and mother?"

"Why!—why!—" faltered Tessie, who had no idea where she would find such records. And without them she might only be Tessie Gilfooly of the aluminum again. And Mr. Bill! Oh, it was cruel!

"If you haven't them you can easily get them," went on Mr. Marvin. He did not seem at all worried because Tessie did not have the necessary records in her pocket. "One of our men—Mr. Douglas, perhaps—can take you to the court house."

"I'll take her!" Mr. Bill offered eagerly.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Where such records are kept," finished Mr. Marvin as if Mr. Bill had never said a word. It was outrageous the way he ignored Mr. Bill. Tessie looked at him indignantly. Didn't he know who Mr. Bill was? "I understand there is a little opposition to your uncle's will. A group of natives, Sons of Sunshine I believe they call themselves, want a native ruler, but you need not worry about them. The Honolulu lawyer, who brought us your uncle's will, tells me that a good majority of the people have declared that they will carry out King Peter's wishes. They are sending a special representative to escort you to the islands. Of course you shouldn't go alone."

"I wouldn't!" declared Tessie hastily. "I'd take my brother—he's a Boy Scout—and Granny. The warm climate will be good for Granny's rheumatism," she added thoughtfully.

"The natives have a curious tradition according to this Honolulu lawyer," Mr. Marvin said, ignoring the Boy Scouts and Granny's rheumatism as he had ignored Mr. Bill. "It is connected with a jewel—a big pearl. They believe that it fell from Heaven, from the Eye of God, and they will never accept a ruler who cannot show them that he or she—" he smiled at Tessie—"has it. The Tear of God, they call it. Unfortunately it has disappeared, and until you have it in your possession it would not be wise——"

"Is this it?" interrupted Tessie, and she opened

The Amazing Inheritance

her hand and showed him the huge pearl caught in the lacelike fibers.

Mr. Marvin put on his glasses and looked at it. "My dear child!" he exclaimed. "Where did you get this?" He was amazed to see that the Tear of God was on Tessie's pink palm. And he listened eagerly to Tessie's story of the native who was neither black nor brown nor yellow, but an attractive mingling of all three, who had followed Mr. Douglas to the Evergreen basement and prostrated himself at her feet before he gave her the pearl—the royal jewel of the Sunshine Islands.

"That must have been Ka-kee-ta. He came with the Honolulu lawyer," explained Mr. Marvin. "He insisted on following Bert so that he could see you at once. He was King Peter's special man, I believe. And he was evidently satisfied that you were the heiress. I suppose there must be a strong family resemblance. It is quite a romance, isn't it, Miss Gilfooly? Take good care of your jewel, for the natives would never accept you as their queen if you should lose it. Perhaps you had better leave it with me? I'll put it in our vault!"

"No." Tessie spoke firmly, although it startled her to know that she had a jewel of such importance. "I must show it to Granny, and to Johnny. Johnny will guard it for me. He's a Boy Scout."

The Amazing Inheritance

"Just as you say." But it was plain that Mr. Marvin did not share Tessie's confidence in a Boy Scout as a custodian of a royal jewel. "And the sooner we get those records the better. Bert will take you to Mifflin to-morrow. I understand your father and mother were married in Mifflin."

Mr. Bill cast an appealing glance at Tessie. He wanted her to refuse to go to Mifflin with Bert Douglas and to insist on going with him, but Tessie only smiled tremulously and murmured that her father and mother had been married in Mifflin, and she would be ready to go with Mr. Douglas any time.

"I've resigned my position at the Evergreen," she added and in her proud young voice there was a little touch of regret. The Evergreen had meant the world to Tessie, and without it she felt a bit forlorn.

IV

GRANNY promptly fainted when she was told that her only granddaughter was a queen. Tessie and Mr. Bill, who was still dutifully obeying his father and looking after Queen Teresa, were at their wits' end. It was Johnny the Boy Scout, who sprinkled water over his grandmother's gray face.

"I shouldn't have told you about Uncle Pete all at once," quavered Tessie, remorsefully, as Granny opened puzzled eyes. Tessie slipped an arm around her. "I should have broken the news to you gently."

Granny smiled feebly and patted Tessie's fingers. "It wasn't your Uncle Pete's death that made me go off like that," she said, her voice growing stronger with every word. "It's hearing that I've been the mother of a king for twenty years without ever knowing it. That was enough to knock the breath out of any woman. I wish your grandfather was alive to hear how right I was when I told Pete there was a good living to be found on the sea as well as on the land. I'd like to know any of Pete's old friends who stayed at home who've been kings! I'm glad Pete took my advice, though the good Lord knows he was too headstrong and stubborn to take anybody's

The Amazing Inheritance

advice but his own. And you're a queen, Tessie!" She smiled proudly at the little queen. "I sure *am* glad for you! When I told you this morning that the good Lord would get around to the Gilfoolys some day, I never thought of anything so grand as this. And I'm glad even if it does mean I'll lose you. You'll be going over to those islands to sit on your throne and wear your crown, and I'll be thinking about you and loving you every minute!" She sat up and gazed at Tessie with a face full of affection and admiration. "I guess there won't be any queens that'll be any prettier than you'll be, when you're dressed up like one! My soul and body! Queen Teresa!" she murmured, as if she found it absolutely impossible to credit this amazing story.

Tessie gave a tremulous little laugh and caught Granny by the shoulders and gave her a little shake. "Can you believe it, Granny?" she cried, as if she could not believe it herself. "Can you believe it?"

Granny shook her head. "No," she said truthfully, "I can't!"

Tessie laughed again and kissed her with warm red lips. "Well, it's true!" she cried triumphantly. "It's true! Isn't it?" she appealed to Mr. Bill. "And I shan't stir a step without you and Johnny! Of course you'll go to the islands with me!"

Granny sighed happily. "I was hoping you'd

The Amazing Inheritance

ask me!" She smoothed the gray hair which had been loosened by Johnny's first-aid treatment and hung in wisps over her face. "I may be an old woman, but I don't like to be left out of things. I like to see new things and pretty things as much as anybody. I'd like to know what Mrs. Scanlon'll say now! She was bragging just this morning when I hung out the clothes because her Lil's a stenographer. I'd like to hear what she says when she knows you're a queen! Queen of the Sunshine Islands!" The words were sweet to her tongue and sweet to her ears. "But there's a lot to do before you're crowned, Tessie!" she declared suddenly.

"I should say there was!" But even while she was agreeing with Granny, Tessie's nose was sniffing the air. "Have you anything on the stove, Granny? I'm sure I smell something burning!" She sniffed again.

"Oh, it's my liver!" Granny flew to the kitchen to turn off the gas which was burning the liver. "I forgot all about dinner when I heard the news," she apologized. "It's lucky I hadn't put in the onions. Then we would have had a mess. Now then, Tessie, what's the first thing to do? I'll bet you have it all planned out in that clever little head of yours." She looked triumphantly at Mr. Bill as if to ask him if he had ever seen another girl with such a clever little head as Tessie's. "Say," she said suddenly, "I don't be-

The Amazing Inheritance

lieve I got your name?" That was true, for Tessie had been so excited when she told Granny the amazing news, that she had never remembered to tell Granny who Mr. Bill was.

"He's young Mr. Kingley, Granny—Mr. Bill!" Tessie was as pink as a rose, and she looked a thousand apologies as she smiled at Mr. Bill. "His father owns the Evergreen," she explained.

"My soul and body!" gasped Granny when she understood who Mr. Bill was.

"My father told me to look after our little queen," Mr. Bill said eagerly, so that Granny might know why he was present at what some people might consider a family council.

"That's very kind of him, I'm sure." But Granny's mind was not on the Evergreen or its kind proprietor. "Tessie," she cried sharply, "that's why a dark-complexioned gentleman has been walking up and down in front of the house to-day. If he went by once, he went by a hundred times. He made me so nervous I almost went out to ask him to exercise on the other end of the block for awhile, and not wear out our sidewalk, but just then a fat man with a tow-head and a big nose came up in a purple taxicab and spoke to him, and they went away together. The dark-complexioned gentleman had rings of some kind in his ears and a yellow sash around his waist. He looked like he was a left-over from a masquerade or something. Dear, dear! It does seem like a

The Amazing Inheritance

dream, don't it? But what's the first thing we do?" She looked at Tessie for orders. Already she accepted Tessie's right to issue orders.

Tessie smiled and squeezed the work-roughened hands. "The first thing is to go to Mifflin and get a copy of father's and mother's wedding license. And the second thing is to find a record of my birth."

"Tessie!" Granny was all admiration. "What a business head you have! She'll make a fine queen, won't she, Mr. Bill? And how are you going to Mifflin?" She looked at Mr. Bill to see if he knew how Tessie was going to Mifflin.

"Mr. Douglas is going to take me in an automobile. He's one of my lawyers," Tessie explained importantly. "The old lawyer, Mr. Marvin, arranged it. I don't see why you can't go with me, Granny—and Johnny, too. It would be a nice ride."

"Sixty miles there and sixty miles back," chuckled Mr. Bill, much pleased to hear that Tessie did not care to drive one hundred and twenty miles alone with Mr. Douglas. "And the country's pretty now."

"That's fine," beamed Granny.

And Johnny the Boy Scout declared it would be fine, too. Johnny was sitting beside Tessie and staring at her with big round eyes. Just imagine having a sister who was a queen! Gee! what would the fellows say?

The Amazing Inheritance

"Tessie, what's that you got in your pocket?" asked Granny suddenly, for her keen eyes had seen the end of something hanging from the pocket of Tessie's black sateen frock.

"The Sunshine native gave it to me." Tessie took the royal jewel, the Tear of God, from her pocket and dangled it before Granny's astonished eyes. "It's the sign I'm Queen of the Sunshine Islands. If I lose it, I lose my kingdom." She laughed softly. She had no intention of losing the royal jewel. "The people won't have a king or queen who can't show them this—the Tear of God. That's what they call it."

"Tessie! Ain't it pretty! And your Uncle Pete wore it?" She took it in her fingers and patted it as she would have patted Pete's fingers if he had been present—and in a mood to be patted. "And now you'll wear it." She wiped a tear from her eyes.

"Not until we get those records and the lawyers say it's all right. It wouldn't be honest!" declared upright Tessie.

"But the native gave it to you himself," objected Granny. She liked to see the royal jewel around Tessie's white neck.

"Oh, he thinks I'm the queen all right, or he would never have given me this, but I have to know I am before I wear it. You can keep it safe for me, Granny, until I do know."

Granny accepted the appointment of custodian

The Amazing Inheritance

of the royal jewel with pride and pleasure. "I'll put it in the baking-powder can, wrap it up in waxed paper," she said. "Nobody would think of looking in a baking-powder can. I often tuck away a quarter or a dime in one. My soul and body!" She had forgotten that Mr. Bill was not a member of the family. She didn't remember it until she had disclosed her secret hiding place, and she looked frightened. Then she glanced at him slyly and smiled triumphantly. "Maybe I won't put it in the baking-powder can after all. I've got a lot more hiding places."

"I'll bet you have!" chuckled Mr. Bill. "But I wish Miss Gilfooly would let father keep it in his safe, or Mr. Marvin take care of it. It isn't safe to have valuables in a house where there are only women."

"There's a man in this house as well as women!" The Boy Scout bristled with indignation at being ignored so completely. "I guess I'm here."

"And you're the biggest help!" Tessie hugged him.

Mr. Bill remembered that she had hugged Granny; and now she had hugged the Boy Scout. Perhaps it would be his turn next. He hoped it would.

"Granny would never have come out of her faint if it hadn't been for you," Tessie told

The Amazing Inheritance

Johnny proudly. "We just stood around like geese, didn't we?" she asked Mr. Bill.

"That was one of the first things I learned," Johnny explained with haughty scorn because they had not learned it. "Every scout has to know how."

"I expect I should go home!" exclaimed Mr. Bill suddenly, although he did not want to go home, and he said so ruefully.

"You can stay and take pot-luck with us if you want to. It's liver and onions." Granny extended the invitation with royal hospitality. "And I'll open a can of my preserved strawberries. I've been saving them for a big occasion, but I guess there won't ever be a bigger occasion than this. Even your wedding, Tessie, won't mean so much to me as your being a queen. Any girl can have a wedding, even Lil Scanlon next door, but I never knew a girl who was a queen before. You can thank your Uncle Pete for your luck. Poor Petel!" she sighed. "He never liked liver and onions," she remembered sadly. "Maybe we shouldn't have them to-night, just when we hear he's been dead six months and left Tessie a throne! Maybe we shouldn't ever eat liver and onions again now we're queens!" And she startled them all by bursting into tears.

Tessie ran to her, and tried to soothe her with loving pats and words. "She's all upset," she told Mr. Bill apologetically.

The Amazing Inheritance

"And no wonder!" Mr. Bill was a bit upset himself at the amazing and interesting situation in which he found himself. "I tell you," he suggested, as inspiration gave him an idea, "suppose you all come down town and have dinner with me? You don't want to bother getting a dinner to-night; and Dad said I was to take care of you." He grinned at Tessie. "I can run you down in the car. Come on to the Waloo with me?"

"I ain't got a thing to wear!" But Granny stopped crying and wiped the tears from her eyes as she reviewed the contents of her closet. "I ripped the sleeves out of my best dress this very afternoon to cut 'em over more stylish."

"You're all right just as you are," Mr. Bill told her. "You look fine—neat as a pin. Just put on your hat and come along."

Granny looked at her black alpaca, which was, as Mr. Bill said, as neat as a pin, and then she turned questioning eyes to Tessie. "I could take off my apron," she said slowly, and when Tessie nodded, she caught Johnny by the shoulder. "But this young man has to wash his hands! Such fists!" She was shocked at the sight of Johnny's hands. "And your own sister a queen on a throne! It's a disgrace!" She hustled Johnny to the kitchen, although he loudly protested that he was going to wash his hands, a Scout knew enough to wash his hands when they were dirty.

"Well!" Mr. Bill drew a long breath when

The Amazing Inheritance

he was alone with Tessie. "This is a corker! An out-and-out corker!"

"It's awfully kind of you to take us to the Waloo," Tessie said softly. "Granny is too excited, and I'm too excited, to get dinner, and we don't like the cafeteria at the corner. And on our way home we could stop at the public library, couldn't we?"

"The public library!" Mr. Bill stared. Why on earth would she want to stop at the public library?

"I'd like to get some books on the Sunshine Islands," explained Tessie. "I don't know a thing about them, and I think a queen should know about her kingdom, don't you?"

"I don't think it will make the slightest difference what you know!" Mr. Bill rather lost his head as he looked into her pink face and her big blue eyes, which had such dark purple lights in them. "You'd be all right if you didn't know anything!" he stammered thickly.

"Oh, Mr. Kingley!" Tessie's pink rose of a face turned like magic into a red rose.

"Call me Bill!" he begged, and his face was red too.

Tessie almost swooned. Call her hero—her wonder man—Bill! She couldn't!

"As Dad said, we belong to the same family—the Evergreen," Mr. Bill reminded her ardently.

Put that way, Tessie managed to falter "Bill,"

The Amazing Inheritance

and she glanced at him from under her long lashes. Mr. Bill gasped, and if Granny had not come in with the washed Boy Scout he would probably have been guilty of the "lesest" kind of *lèse majesté*.

As they went out to Mr. Bill's car, a shadow by the lilac bushes turned into a man and slunk away, but not before Granny's sharp eyes had seen him slip down the street.

"I'd like to know what that man was doing there," she grumbled. "Tessie, you got the Tear of God in your pocket?" she asked in a hoarse whisper, and when Tessie said she had, that her fingers were holding it tight, Granny's frown changed to a self-satisfied smile. "Then I guess he's welcome to what he finds. There isn't anything worth stealing in the house now, I guess!"

"I'm glad I put on my medal!" exclaimed Johnny. "I put on all my insignia for you, Tessie." He thrust his small chest forward so that Tessie could see for herself that he had done honor to her.

"Bless the boy!" Tessie bent her head and kissed him.

Mr. Bill all but died of envy. He wished that he was a Boy Scout, and then he was glad that he wasn't. A Boy Scout might have privileges, but a man could have hopes. He was not sure what he hoped, but he knew that he admired Tessie tremendously, and that it was amazingly

The Amazing Inheritance

exciting to be on such friendly terms with a queen. It seemed impossible that only a few hours ago he had never known that there was a Tessie Gilfooly in the world. And now—why now she seemed the only girl in the world!

V

THEY had a delightful dinner at the Waloo. Granny gazed around the big room rather awed by the ornate display of rose velvet and gold, the crystal electroliers, and the army of waiters.

"I suppose this is what you'll have all the time in the Sunshine Islands," she said with pride. "Just think of your Uncle Pete, Tessie, sitting down to dinner every day in a room like this and to a dinner like this. I don't wonder he never came home. The good Lord has sure been kind to the Gilfoolys!"

Tessie did not eat much, and she did not talk much. She was still too dazed at what had happened. She could not believe that it was true. It couldn't be true that she was in the dining room of the Waloo Hotel, with Mr. Bill as the host of a family party—a family party of Gilfoolys! Such things never happened to poor working girls. But Mr. Bill's radiant smile and eager attention convinced her that at least he was real.

Gilbert Douglas was with a party of young people at the other end of the room. He came over to speak to Tessie, and tell her that he would call for her the next morning about ten. Mr. Bill yearned to stab him with his dinner knife.

The Amazing Inheritance

When Bert went back to his friends and told them who Tessie was, there were many curious and admiring, and almost as many envious, glances sent toward her. Altogether it was a very pleasant dinner. But Tessie would not loiter over the coffee—not even to listen to the orchestra nor to dance once with Mr. Bill.

“I’d faint,” she declared. “I feel all wobbly sitting down. And I want to stop at the library. It closes at nine. And anyway it wouldn’t be right to Uncle Pete. We had to have something to eat, but we don’t have to dance.”

Every one in the big dining room seemed to know who Tessie was when she left, and there was much craning of necks and whispering. The head waiter bowed them out with much ceremony and hoped that Tessie would come again. Tessie was pink to her little ears, and she shyly murmured that she would like to come again.

They reached the library barely in time. The librarian was just locking the door of the branch station when Mr. Bill and Tessie ran up to her. She obligingly unlocked the door and went back with them.

“The Sunshine Islands,” she repeated, when she heard Tessie breathlessly explain what she wanted. “I never heard of them.”

“They’re in the Pacific Ocean.” Tessie told her with much importance.

“We have several books that speak of the

The Amazing Inheritance

islands in the Pacific Ocean," the librarian remembered. "But why on earth do you come running in here at this time of night to ask for books on the Sunshine Islands?" And she looked from pink-cheeked Tessie to grinning Mr. Bill, as if she would not produce one of her books until that question was answered.

"Because," dimpled Tessie, who saw no reason why she should not tell—it was nothing to be ashamed of, and she felt that she had to give some reason for taking the librarian back to her library after the door had been locked for the night—"because I've just heard that I'm the Queen of the Sunshine Islands!"

"My goodness!" exclaimed the surprised librarian, and she found Tessie all the books which mentioned the islands in the Pacific Ocean. "There!" she said. "If you read all these you'll learn something about your kingdom. The best book," she remembered with a frown, "the one that tells all about the Pacific islands is out. A man came in after dinner and took it."

"What kind of a man?" asked Mr. Bill, not because he cared but because the librarian seemed to expect something to be said.

"A tall man, young and thin, with rough brown hair and brown eyes and rather shabby clothes." The librarian appeared to describe her client by looking at Mr. Bill and seeing his opposite.

"It must have been Joe Cary!" exclaimed Tes-

The Amazing Inheritance

sie. "It would be just like Joe to learn everything about my kingdom before I can read a word!" She looked vexed.

"Save you a lot of trouble," suggested Mr. Bill. "He can tell you what he learns, and you won't have much time for reading now."

"That's true!" Tessie stopped frowning to smile. "I'll let Joe do my reading for me. That's the way queens do, isn't it?—have some one do things for them? Thank you for the books." She turned politely to the librarian, who was staring at her with unbelieving amazement.

"My goodness! I'm much obliged to you for coming in for those books even if you never read them. I've been librarian at this branch station for three years now, and nothing as interesting as this ever happened. I hope you'll be a very happy queen!" And the librarian drew a long breath. She had never supposed that she would ever tell a queen to her face that she hoped she would be happy. Such things might happen in books, but surely they had never happened before in a real library.

"Thank you," said Tessie, putting out her hand to shake the librarian's lean fingers. "I'm going to try to be a good queen."

"My goodness!" repeated the librarian, as Tessie, Mr. Bill and the books went to join Granny and Johnny. "My goodness, but I'm glad I didn't close up a minute earlier than I did!"

The Amazing Inheritance

There were no lights in the narrow street when Mr. Bill turned his car away from the avenue. In contrast to the brilliantly lighted thoroughfare, the street seemed darker than a pocket. The city fathers depended on the moon for illumination on certain nights designated by the almanac, and if the moon was dilatory or negligent, that was not their fault. The lights on Mr. Bill's car were all he had to show him the way, but with their aid, he found the shabby little cottage without any trouble at all.

"It's been a very pleasant evening," Granny said politely, as she stepped from the car. "I'm sure we've all enjoyed it, and we have the liver and onions for to-morrow night when we've had time to calm down a bit. Good night, Mr——" She discovered she had forgotten Mr. Bill's name. She was horrified.

"Call me Bill!" begged Mr. Bill in the friendliest way. "I'm such a friend of your granddaughter's—at least I'm going to be such a friend—we belonged to the same family, you know, the Evergreen—that I want to be a friend of yours, too."

"You've proved yourself a friend," beamed Granny. "I declare I'm that tired I'll be glad to go to bed. I'm not as young as I was, and it's a good deal of a strain for an old woman to hear all in one day that her son was a king and that her granddaughter is a queen. Come, Johnny,

The Amazing Inheritance

we'll go right to bed. Good night, Bill, and thank you kindly."

She was tired, and her step was heavy as she went along the walk and up the steps. On the narrow porch her foot touched something that gave beneath her weight. It was soft, and yet it wasn't. Granny drew back her foot, stood still and screamed. There was—yes, there was something on her nice clean porch that did not belong there!

"I'll make a light," offered the resourceful Scout.

"Not with two sticks of wood," objected Tessie, who had run to her grandmother and was staring at the black shadow on the porch floor. "It takes too long!"

"I got a match, silly!" retorted her brother. "We can use matches when we got 'em!"

But Mr. Bill had struck a match, and by its feeble light they could see that the black shadow was the body of a man, huddled on Granny's nice clean porch. Granny shrieked again.

"My soul and body!" she cried. "This is too much!" And she sat heavily down on the step. "I don't like men murdered on my front porch!" she wailed.

"Murdered!" Tessie shrieked, too.

"He isn't murdered," declared Mr. Bill, who had been bending over the body. "At least I

The Amazing Inheritance

don't think he is. Darn it!" For the match flickered and went out.

"Who—who is it?" whispered Tessie, and she trembled so that Mr. Bill had to put his arm around her. "Who is it?"

"I don't know. He looks like a black man—at least he isn't a white man. And I caught a glimpse of an earring as the match went out. We must get some light!" He looked about for some light, but the resourceful Scout had taken the key from Granny's limp fingers, thrown the door open and turned on the light in the hall. There was a white stream through the doorway, and as it fell on the dark face of the man on the porch, he moved slightly and moaned.

"Thank the good Lord he isn't dead!" Granny stumbled to her feet. "Who are you and what do you want?" she asked the stranger sharply. "I'll bet he was after that Tear of God, Tessie," she said, as the dark head moved away from her, and she, like Mr. Bill, caught a glimpse of an earring.

"Oh!" Tessie's fingers felt for the royal jewel. It was there in her pocket, and she grasped it eagerly. Just suppose she had lost it!

"I'll take him away," offered Mr. Bill. "You don't want him here. I'll take him away."

"Hello! What's up here, Mrs. Gilfooly?" And there was Officer Clancy peering at them. "What's the matter here?"

The Amazing Inheritance

"Well, Mr. Clancy!" Granny turned eagerly around. "I'm sure glad to see you to-night. We go out for a pleasant dinner with a friend of my granddaughter, who's just learned that her Uncle Pete, my eldest, has made her Queen of the Sunshine Islands, and we come home to find this dark-complected gentleman on my nice clean front porch. I almost stepped on him." She shuddered as she recalled her sensations when she put her foot on the dark-complexioned gentleman. "I couldn't think what it was, but it was him!" And she waved her hand toward the stranger who had managed to sit up, and was staring around with dull eyes.

It was no wonder that Officer Clancy was dazed and bewildered to hear Granny talk so glibly of queens and porches, but he stooped over the stranger, who curled up like a snail.

"Now then, my man, what are you doing here, frightening the ladies out of their wits?" asked Clancy sharply.

The stranger shrank away and muttered something. The words sounded like "The Shark! The Shark!" but Granny thought that her ears must have deceived her. A shark was a fish that lived in the ocean. There were no sharks in her neighborhood.

"The shark! The shark!" was all the stranger would say that any one could understand, although he stammered a lot of words that sounded

The Amazing Inheritance

like anything but language to the little group gathered around him.

"I can't make head nor tail of what he says!" Officer Clancy exclaimed helplessly. "I'll try him again. Now then, my man, what were you doing here?"

"On my nice clean porch!" added Granny shrilly.

But the man only muttered some more of the unintelligible gibberish jumbled around the word "Shark." Officer Clancy jerked him to his feet, and he stood leaning weakly against the policeman.

"I better take him along to the station," the latter suggested. "He hasn't done any harm, has he? Maybe he was taken sick as he was passing by, and came in to get help," he suggested eagerly.

"He's got a lump as big as an egg on the back of his head," declared Mr. Bill. "Looks to me as if somebody had blackjacked him!"

"That so?" Officer Clancy looked at the head whose black thatch was unlike any hair he had ever seen before. "There is a lump there! I expect that was it, Mrs. Gilfooly. Somebody slugged him, and he crawled up on your porch and fainted. And I bet I saw the guy that did it! I passed a queer-looking chap not ten minutes ago. He was dark like this fellow, and his hair was frizzed for fair, and he was in his bare feet. He was walking fast and looking straight ahead of

The Amazing Inheritance

him. I remember I thought he was a fine figure of fun. I never saw anybody just like him."

"Could it have been Ka-kee-ta?" Tessie asked Mr. Bill in a frightened whisper. "He was in his bare feet." She shivered.

"Ka— oh, the chap Mr. Marvin spoke about. I wonder!" And Mr. Bill looked at Tessie.

Clancy's sharp ears heard their whispers. "Friend of yours?" he asked quickly.

"No, not a friend," Mr. Bill answered just as quickly. "Just a messenger of some sort. I think you're right, Officer, you better take this man away."

"I'll take him to the station until his mind clears up and he can tell us how it was. You can drive us over." He nodded to Mr. Bill.

"I would be glad to." But Mr. Bill sounded anything but glad. "Only I hate to leave Mrs. Gilfooly and Miss Gilfooly here alone."

"I guess I'm here!" shouted the insulted Boy Scout. "I guess I know what to do if anything happens!"

"There won't anything happen," promised Clancy. "It's happened. And I'll have the sergeant send a man right over to keep an eye out. I'm sure glad to hear of your luck, Miss Gilfooly." He turned to Tessie and solemnly shook her hand. "You'll make a fine queen!"

"I don't know as I want to be a queen if it

The Amazing Inheritance

means finding strange men fainting on our front porch," Tessie murmured almost tearfully.

"Perhaps I'd better stay," suggested Mr. Bill, as he saw how she trembled. "I can sit downstairs and read your books."

"You need your rest as well as we do if you're going to be any help to your pa to-morrow," objected Granny. "We'll be all right with Johnny and the man Officer Clancy sends up. You take that stranger to the station, Mr. Clancy, and lock him up tight. I'll bet he knows more than he's letting on." She peered into the dark face. "Thank the good Lord tattooed noses ain't fashionable in Waloo," she murmured. "Tessie, you ought to go to bed. There's Joe Cary!" She stopped as she heard a whistle up the street. "Joe! Joe Cary!" she called.

"Here!" answered Joe. "What's up?" he demanded as he came up the walk. "You can run along," he told Mr. Bill and Officer Clancy, when he heard the story. "I'll look after things here." When Mr. Bill had reluctantly said good night, holding Tessie's fingers until Joe took them from him, and gone away with Clancy and the stranger, Joe turned to Tessie.

"You'd better go to bed, Tess. You must be all tired out!"

"She is!" Granny answered for her. "We're all tired. I declare it does take it out of a body to have such wonderful things happen. Can you

The Amazing Inheritance

believe it, Joe? We had a nice dinner at the Waloo," she said, following him into the house. "And that Mr. Bill is a real pleasant young fellow. My soul and body!" she exclaimed, staring around in amazement, for the house which she had left as neat as wax was now in disorder. Drawers had been pulled out and their contents dumped on the floor, closets emptied in a way that startled and angered Granny. "Somebody's been here, Joe! Somebody has been all over this house!" She stared at Joe. "I expect they came to get that jewel of yours, Tessie," she guessed loudly. "That Tear of God! Thank goodness I didn't put it in the baking-powder can. Thank goodness you got it in your pocket! Well, this is too much!"

"There, there, Granny!" soothed Joe. "They didn't get anything. You trot up to bed, and Tess and I'll straighten things out."

It took some time before Granny could be persuaded to leave them and more time before the drawers were pushed into place and doors shut on the disordered closets. Joe looked at Tessie. Her face was milk-white and her eyes were heavy and tired.

"Well, Tess!" He put his hands on her shoulders so that she would look into his face. "What do you think about queens now? Are you still glad that you are such an old-fashioned, wornout thing as a queen?" He bent to peer into her eyes.

The Amazing Inheritance

"I don't know," she faltered. She put up her hands to clasp his strong fingers. "It isn't what I thought it would be, if things like this are going to happen."

"All sorts of things happen to queens," prophesied Joe. "You have only to read the papers to know that. The world doesn't need queens any more. I'm sorry, Tessie," his hands slipped from her shoulders to her waist and he drew her to him. "I'm sorry you're one!" His voice was soft as velvet and honey-sweet.

But Tessie pushed him away. "Why, Joe Cary!" she exclaimed indignantly. "If that isn't just like you! You never want me to have any fun! You only want me to go to the Y. W. C. A. gymnasium, and to study shorthand!"

"I don't want you to be a queen!" he insisted stubbornly, his face flushed, his eyes snapping.

"Why not?" she asked defiantly, and when he did not answer her at once, she asked him again, more softly this time. "Why not, Joe Cary?"

"Because," he said, and he folded his arms across his chest and looked at her scornfully, "queens always think they are a darned sight better than other people. I'm one of the other people, but you needn't think you are any better than I am, Tessie Gilfooly, even if you are queen of a lot of cannibals. Queen!" He had nothing but hot scorn for the word.

She turned away from him impatiently. "You

The Amazing Inheritance

never want me to do anything but work," she pouted. "The idea of talking to me like that, as if a queen wasn't any more than a scrubwoman. I shan't listen to you another minute. I'm going to bed. But before I go, I'll tell you one thing, Joe Cary: if I had heard you were a king, I wouldn't have been so nasty. I would have been proud and glad for you!"

"Tessie!" he cried. But she tossed her head and ran up the steep stairs.

She would not look back at him even if he did stand at the foot of the stairs and call to her. He had hurt her when he had said that queens were no better than other people. The very idea! Mr. Bill never talked that way. Indeed, he never did! Tessie stopped thinking about disgruntled Joe Cary so that she could think of the wonderful Mr. Bill. Oh, wasn't he the most wonderful!

VI

IN spite of her tearful assertion that she knew she would not sleep a wink, Tessie was soon dreaming of her new kingdom and of Mr. Bill. Not once did shabby Joe Cary intrude on her dream of glory. It seemed only a minute from the time she crept shivering into bed beside Granny, before Granny was shaking her shoulder.

"After nine o'clock, Tessie!" she was calling. "If you're going to Mifflin to get your ma's and pa's wedding license at ten, you'd better get up right away!"

Tessie opened her eyes slowly and reluctantly. She was afraid of what they would see. Yes, there was Granny calling her as she called her every morning. There was the ugly old bureau and the crayon portrait of her grandfather. Of course, she had been dreaming. She wasn't a queen. She had never been at the Waloo for dinner with the wonderful Mr. Bill. She would have to get up and put on her old sateen and go and sell aluminum in the Evergreen basement. She wished she hadn't dreamed that Uncle Pete had died and made her a queen. Such a dream as that made it harder than ever to waken. She had known all the time that it was only a dream. Such wonderful things never happened to poor

The Amazing Inheritance

working girls. And if it really was nine o'clock, she was afraid to imagine how Mr. Walker would rebuke her for her tardiness. Why had Granny let her sleep when Granny knew that she would be fined if she were late?

"And your friend, that Mr. Bill, stopped here half an hour ago on his way to the store," went on Granny, shaking out Tessie's clothes and hanging them on a chair. "We got to get you some new things, Tessie. These ain't royal. They don't do credit to your poor Uncle Pete, who's been so good to you. Mr. Bill said he stopped at the police station, and the police told him that we were right last night when we said that man on the porch was hit on the head. A friend came for him, and after he had talked to him, he told the police just how it was. The colored man was walking along the street, when all of a sudden he didn't know nothing. I don't suppose he could have upset my closets if he was unconscious, and so long as nothing's missing, I ain't going to worry. But there certainly were queer doings last night. You hurry right along, Tessie. Your coffee's all ready, and I warmed up the liver. No knowing where we'll be for dinner to-night, and we can't be wasteful even if we are queens."

There it was, that most disturbing word! Tessie swung her feet over the side of the bed and stared at her grandmother, who was already dressed in her black alpaca instead of her morning

The Amazing Inheritance

calico, and whose front hair must have been surprised to find itself out of curling pins at nine o'clock in the morning.

"Then it's all true!" she faltered. She told herself again that it couldn't be true. It just could not be true. She thought she would die if it wasn't true, but she knew it wasn't.

"What's true?" questioned Granny, who was putting the room to rights.

"That I'm a queen?" Tessie blushed hotly, as she asked the question. It was so perfectly ridiculous and unbelievable, and yet Granny talked as if it might be true.

Granny stood still with Tessie's worn blue serge suit in one hand and a clothesbrush in the other. "Of course you're a queen!" The firm confident tone sent a shiver of delight down Tessie's spine. "Didn't your Uncle Pete die and make you a queen? Come down just as soon as you're dressed, Tessie. We ain't got time to waste to-day."

Even when Bert Douglas drove up in a shining touring car, Tessie could not believe that she was to ride in it, although Bert told her that she was, and he for one was mighty glad that she was.

"We have a corking day!" he exclaimed, with an approving glance at the cloudless sky. "And we'll have a corking ride. I'm glad your people were married sixty miles from Waloo. This is just a formality, you know, Miss Gilfooly. We

The Amazing Inheritance

all know that you really are the Queen of the Sunshine Islands. We don't need any certificates." And he laughed joyously. It was so strange and unbelievable and delightful that he was to drive a young queen to Mifflin and back.

"It's so wonderful that I can't believe it," Tessie told him earnestly, and her voice quivered with the wonder of it. She looked speculatively at the tonneau of the big car. There was no one in it. "Could we take my grandmother, Mr. Douglas?" She raised her big blue eyes appealingly. "She would enjoy the ride. And my brother Johnny? He's a Boy Scout."

"Sure, we can take all the royal family," chuckled Bert. "There's plenty of room, and we'll feel safer to have a Scout with us." He laughed again as he hospitably opened the tonneau door.

Mrs. Scanlon stood at her window and watched Granny and Johnny settle themselves proudly in the car. She saw Tessie take the seat next to the wheel, and she was green with envy from her red hair to her patched black shoes. She had heard the news, and in her heart she wished that she had had a son to run away to sea and be a king. "My Lil would make a better-looking queen than that washed-out Tessie Gilfooly," she thought, as she watched them from behind the skimpy curtain. "Lil's suit was new this spring, and that blue dud Tessie has on is a year old if it's a day.

The Amazing Inheritance

I don't believe it's really true! Such things don't happen! Queen, indeed!" And she sniffed loudly and elevated her long thin nose because little Tessie Gilfooly had come home with some ridiculous story about being a queen.

Jonah, Johnny's dog—a mongrel with a most rakish brown spot on his white face—jumped wistfully around the car. Jonah wanted to drive to Mifflin too. He saw no reason why he should be left at home alone.

"Could we take him?" asked Granny, eager for the family to enjoy the ride as a family. "He'd enjoy it."

And Jonah joined the two in the tonneau.

"Just as well he's going," muttered Mrs. Scanlon. "I wouldn't have no time to feed anybody's dog to-day!" And to show how little she cared about the good fortune which had come to her neighbors, she took her chairs and tables out of the parlor and gave the room a thorough cleaning.

Bert was right. It was a wonderful day—a blue and gold day. There was not a cloud in the sky, nor a care in the car. The road to Mifflin was velvet smooth, so that the drive, as Bert had prophesied, was delightful. It was no time at all before they were in front of the red brick building which was Mifflin's new Court House. But when they went in and demanded a copy of the record of the marriage of John Gilfooly and Teresa Andrews, which had been solemnized in

The Amazing Inheritance

Mifflin twenty years ago, the clerk could not find the record.

"That's funny!" he exclaimed. "It was here yesterday, but it isn't here to-day!" He looked puzzled.

"Did you see it yesterday?" demanded Bert, with all the importance of a six-months lawyer.

"Sure I saw it yesterday. A man came in and asked for a copy. Funny thing! In all the time I've been here, no one has ever asked about that license. And now yesterday a man wanted it and to-day you want it." The coincidence impressed him as so strange that he blinked.

"Was he a black man and did he have a tattooed nose?" asked Tessie eagerly.

The clerk shook his head. "No, he had light hair and a big nose with freckles all over it. He was what you would call a blond. With a big nose," he insisted almost as if he thought it was quite unusual for a blond to have a nose at all.

Tessie looked at Bert, and at Granny and Johnny. But not one of them could tell her anything about a blond with a big nose. Granny could only shake her head.

"He must have sneaked the record when I went out to look at the fire," the clerk said indignantly. "Ferguson's store had a little blaze yesterday, and when I heard the fire engine I naturally went to the door. But I can't have this sort of thing,"

The Amazing Inheritance

he added querulously. "I can't have my records stolen!"

"No, I shouldn't think you could," agreed Bert. "And you had better find out who stole this record."

"I shall!" The clerk was quite offended because Bert had thought it necessary to tell him what to do. "I'll call the sheriff right away." And he bustled over to the telephone.

"But—but why should any one steal my father's and mother's marriage license?" Tessie could not imagine why any one would steal a piece of paper. Money or a jewel—the Tear of God even—could be used, but a piece of paper——

Bert smiled at her puzzled face. "Some one might want to make it impossible for you to prove that you are John Gilfooly's eldest child," he explained carefully.

Tessie gasped. "The idea! But whoever would?" She could not imagine.

Granny bristled indignantly. "Well, they can't do that!" she declared. "Not while I have breath in my body to say she is! I guess I know!"

"Sure you do!" And Bert grinned at her.

But Granny wanted more than smiles. She wanted action—immediate action.

"What are we going to do now?" she demanded. "Can't Tessie be a queen unless she has her ma's and pa's wedding license?"

"I don't see why you need any old paper," put

The Amazing Inheritance

in Johnny. "If you want to know about the wedding of father and mother, all you have to do is to ask Granny. She was at the wedding, weren't you, Granny?"

Granny turned to gaze at him with pride. "Bless the boy!" she exclaimed in honest admiration. "Of course I was there! And I can tell the lawyers all about it! That was a bright thought, Johnny, but I'm glad it didn't come to you before. If you'd had it in Waloo we'd have missed a pleasant ride. I can tell you all about the wedding," she said to Bert, and there was much triumph in her voice, "all about the bride's dress and the refreshments and everything!"

"I don't believe that your evidence will be enough, Mrs. Gilfooly," Bert said reluctantly and regretfully, for he would have preferred to tell Granny that her story of the Gilfooly-Andrews wedding would be sufficient to place Tessie on any throne. "You are too near a relative to be disinterested. That's what the court would say," he explained hastily as Granny snorted.

"My soul and body!" She stared at him. "As if I'd lie about my own son or my own granddaughter! But there were other folks at the wedding," she remembered joyously. "The Hortons, who live over on Olive street, were there. Sophie Horton was Tessie's mother's bridesmaid, and Sam Horton knocked over a piano lamp the night of the wedding and came near burning up

The Amazing Inheritance

the bride. He'll remember and be glad to tell you that my son John married Teresa Andrews right and proper. And that ain't all," went on Granny, who could accomplish great things when she began little things, "the man who married John and Teresa and baptized Tessie is alive to this day and living in this very town. We've only got to go to the Reverend Townshend's house to hear all about it. I suppose the law would believe a regular minister if it wouldn't believe a loving grandmother," she said to Bert, with a decided tinge of resentment in her hearty voice.

Bert laughed apologetically. "That's fine! But you understand, Mrs. Gilfooly, it is because you are so close to Miss Gilfooly that your evidence wouldn't be sufficient. The court might suspect such a near relative, but the word of the minister who married Miss Gilfooly's parents should be enough for any court."

"I should think so!" snorted Granny, who had nothing but contempt for a court which would not believe a grandmother.

They drove through the pretty streets of Mifflin to the home of Mr. Townshend, which was almost hidden by shrubbery and vines, and the Boy Scout rang the bell loudly. But Mr. Townshend was in Waloo visiting his sister, and the young granddaughter, who answered the bell, had never heard of the Gilfoolys.

"Never mind!" exclaimed Granny cheerfully,

The Amazing Inheritance

for Tessie looked as if she did mind. "We know where to go now for what we want, and that's everything, no matter what you're looking for. You say Reverend Townshend's sister lives on Tenth Avenue South?" she asked the young granddaughter. "Mr. Douglas will just drive us there and hear with his own ears what Reverend Townshend has to say."

"Sure I'll drive you!" Bert said. "That's my job!" And he looked as if he liked his job enormously.

But black luck preceded them, for when they returned to Waloo and drove to Tenth Avenue South, they learned that the Reverend Townshend had been knocked down by an automobile as he was crossing a street that afternoon, and was lying in the hospital with concussion of the brain. And they found, on driving to Olive street, that the Hortons had gone to Vermont for the summer.

"I don't believe I ever was born!" Tessie was almost in tears. Her lips quivered. So did her voice.

"Tut, tut!" rebuked her grandmother. "There were fifty-six folks, as I remember, at that wedding, and it will be funny if I can't find some of them. You don't want to get discouraged at the beginning of anything, Tessie, not if you ever want to see the end of it."

"Why don't you drop it, Tess?" advised Joe Cary, when he heard about the blond man with a

The Amazing Inheritance

big nose, the stolen marriage record, and about the Reverend Townshend who was in the hospital with concussion of the brain. "The Fates seem to be against you! So are some people, I should judge. There is evidently some one who doesn't want you to be the Queen of the Sunshine Islands. Look at last night! Look at to-day! Why do you want to be a queen, anyway?" He asked the question as he would have asked why she wanted to be a salesgirl, or why she did not want to be a stenographer.

Tessie stared at him. The idea of asking such a question! Joe Cary was crazy! And she told him so. "You talk as if being a queen was like selling aluminum in the Evergreen!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"It isn't as decent!" cried Joe, and then Tessie knew, beyond a doubt, that he was crazy.

"You can't stop being a queen if you are one!" she flared.

"Why can't you?" demanded Joe. "Can't you abdicate? Seems to me I've read of several kings and queens who were glad to abdicate. You don't have to be a queen unless you please, Tessie Gilfooly!" He actually did seem to think that being a queen was like selling aluminum.

"Joe—Joe Cary—" she began in exasperation, and then she startled him by bursting into tears—"you—you never want me to have any f-fun!" she hiccuped.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Oh, great Scott, Tess!" he said helplessly, and he would have taken her in his arms and kissed the tears away, she was so little and sweet and unreasonable, but Granny snatched her from him.

"There, there, my lamb!" she crooned. "You're all tired out. You just come to your old Granny. There's some folks," she said over her shoulder to Joe, "who are quick enough to tell other folks what to do, but I wonder what they would say if they were to find themselves kings."

Joe stared at her, and then he laughed. "I know what I would do," he declared promptly. "I never would be a king! Not for a minute!" He seemed proud of himself—of what he would be.

"Then you'd be a coward, Joe Cary, and a shirk!" Granny pricked the balloon of his pride with her frankness. "When the good Lord puts responsibilities and duties on a body's shoulders, he can't throw 'em off without being a coward and a shirk. What he has to do is to carry them the best he knows how. Now I want you to stop picking on Tessie just because she's a queen. It isn't her fault, and you needn't talk to her as if it was. We don't none of us know why she was picked out to look after those queer folks in the Pacific Ocean, but I guess the good Lord knows His business, and He knows the Gilfoolys. It isn't any crime to be a queen. It's a privilege,

The Amazing Inheritance

and we're all going to enjoy it with Tessie. I don't want to hear any more picking," she repeated sternly.

"All right, Granny," Joe murmured meekly, but his eyes twinkled. "Just as you say. Tess can think she is Queen of England, and I shan't say another word!"

VII

“**A**ND about this wedding license, I’ll put on my thinking cap,” remarked Granny. She went into the bedroom and closed the door.

When Tessie was a little thing and heard Granny talk of her thinking cap, she always visualized the cap as something between the formal Sunday black straw or velvet, and the Monday morning gingham sunbonnet Granny wore when she hung out the washing. And now that Tessie was a big girl, she knew no more of what a thinking cap was like than she had when she was seven, for Granny had never worn one in public. She always closed the door before she put it on.

But as usual, the thinking cap quickly produced results, and in no time at all Granny emerged with half a dozen names scribbled on a piece of paper. They soon found Mrs. Waterman and Mr. Jacob Dasset, who had been at the wedding of John Gilfooly and Teresa Andrews, and could remember the ceremony perfectly. They were thrilled to hear that the inheritance, a kingdom in the Pacific Ocean, of the daughter of John Gilfooly and Teresa Andrews, might hang on their word, and they grew incoherent as they ransacked their memories for recollections of twenty years ago.

The Amazing Inheritance

"A queen!" exclaimed the astonished Mrs. Waterman. "Can you believe it! And a mighty pretty queen she'll make!" She looked with admiration at Tessie's flushed and dimpled face. "The spitting image of her ma, ain't she, Mrs. Gilfooly? And I tell you, miss, there wasn't a prettier girl in the state than Tessie Andrews when she married John Gilfooly. Ain't I right, Mrs. Gilfooly?"

Granny nodded. "John was a handsome man, too," she declared. "They made a beautiful couple, Tessie. I wish you could have seen them!"

"You bet I remember the wedding of Jack Gilfooly and Tess Andrews!" Mr. Dassett spoke a bit testily that any one should have thought he would have forgotten. "Didn't Sam Horton knock over the lamp and near set the bride on fire? It would have been a bad deal for you, young lady," he smiled at Tessie, "if he had. There wouldn't have been no queens then, you bet!"

Granny's thinking cap produced not only witnesses to the wedding, but also told her where to unearth old Doctor Grannis, who had brought Tessie into the world, and who swore he remembered the six-pound, red-faced mite.

"Well, are you satisfied now?" Granny asked Mr. Marvin, when the statements of her witnesses, duly signed and adorned with notarial seals, lay on the desk before him.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Perfectly!" But Mr. Marvin did not look at her and smile, he looked at her blushing granddaughter. "Perfectly! The court can ask for nothing more. But you can understand, Mrs. Gilfooly, why we cannot accept the evidence of the interested parties. But these statements make everything all right, and Miss Gilfooly is Queen of the Sunshine Islands." He rose and bowed to Her Majesty. "But according to the terms of her uncle's will, she is to remain here until his personal representative arrives to escort her to her kingdom. And in the meantime—" He touched the button on his desk.

Tessie and Granny held their breaths as they waited to hear what was going to happen in the meantime.

At the whirr of the buzzer, the door, which had been tightly closed opened, and Bert Douglas shot in. He was followed by a man who was not black nor red nor yellow, but an attractive combination of the three colors. He wore a blue blouse hanging over his trousers which flapped around his bare feet. His hair was frizzed and stiffened until it stood half a foot away from his scalp and was adorned with shells. His nose was tattooed in red and blue, and in his hand he carried an ax. At least Granny called the strange weapon an ax. The blade shone like silver.

Granny shrieked when she saw him, and clutched Tessie by the hand as if she would run

The Amazing Inheritance

away with her. Johnny the Boy Scout stepped bravely before the women of his family and stared at the strange creature, who stood with bowed head and an air of great humility. His humility did not deceive Granny, not for a second. She did not trust him, and she kept a firm hold of Tessie's fingers.

"This is Ka-kee-ta, the protector of the royal person," exclaimed Mr. Marvin.

And as if to prove his words, Ka-kee-ta jumped into the air and clicked his bare feet together before he dropped on his knees before Tessie, and laid the blade of his ax against her shabby brown shoes. Tessie shrank back and caught her breath.

"It is his duty and privilege to accompany the king, or queen, wherever he may go," went on Mr. Marvin. "He came with the Honolulu lawyer, who brought the papers concerning King Pete's death, and the king's will. When he saw Miss Gilfooly he was so convinced that she was the rightful heir, that he gave her the royal jewel, the Tear of God, and it has been difficult to keep him from her until these formalities," he tapped the sworn statements with the notarial seals, "were settled. Now," he smiled and rose, regarding Tessie with amused kindly eyes, "he will protect and guard his queen."

"Oh, my!" breathed his queen, in mingled dismay and excitement. She stared at her guard.

The Amazing Inheritance

It was Granny who looked dubiously at the protector of the royal person.

"Do you mean he'll board with us?" she asked, wondering how on earth she was going to find room for him in her little cottage.

"I guess I can look after my own sister," declared the Boy Scout, red with indignation, and no wonder. But he, too, stared at Ka-kee-ta. Gee whizz! what would the fellows say when they saw him?

"He will always be near the queen," Mr. Marvin answered Granny, but he ignored Johnny. "I understand that it is the custom in the Sunshine Islands for the ruler to have a bodyguard."

"But who is to feed him and sleep him until this personal representative comes to Waloo?" demanded Granny. "Now that Tessie's left her job at the Evergreen, there won't be so much coming in as there was. And a big strapping chap like that will eat a lot!" Granny shook her head. She did not see how it was to be done. She stepped forward and looked boldly at Mr. Marvin. "I'd like to know just what there is in this queen business for us?" she asked bluntly. "Tessie isn't living like a queen according to my way of thinking. Our house, even if it is small and needs paint, was all right for a girl when she was selling aluminum in the Evergreen, but it ain't all right for a queen. A queen shouldn't live in a house where there ain't any electric light, nor

The Amazing Inheritance

no dining room, and no plaster on half the kitchen ceiling—for it fell down last spring when we had the big rainstorm, you remember? It isn't a proper place for a queen at all! And clothes! We all need new clothes with a queen in the family. But where are we going to get them? Are there any wages in this queen business?"

"My dear Mrs. Gilfooly! And Miss Gilfooly!" Mr. Marvin was all apologies. "There are ample funds for anything you may wish to purchase. I could not advance any money until the question of Miss Gilfooly's birth had been settled beyond dispute, but now—" he said something in a low voice to grinning Bert Douglas, who left the room. "It is impossible for me to say exactly what the queen's income will be, but I understand it will be large and generous. From what I hear I should say that the Sunshine Islands are rich and prosperous. The natives will do well by their little queen. And there is also King Peter's personal estate. We will know all about the exact figures when the personal representative arrives. But you are right when you say that the queen should be properly housed. And you could scarcely be expected to provide for Ka-kee-ta on your present income!" He laughed softly to think that any one would think she should.

"I might be expected to. Some folks expect a body to do everything," cackled Granny, mollified and radiant. "But I couldn't do it even if I

The Amazing Inheritance

am a good manager. I might have trusted Pete to arrange for everything even if the Pete I knew never thought of anybody but himself. He was only a boy, then," she explained apologetically, "and there ain't no boy so thoughtful as a grown man. And this—this—" She looked at Ka-kee-ta, who stood just behind Tessie, the blade of his ax glittering beside his bushy head. "He was Pete's friend?" she asked uncertainly.

"The protector of the royal person. The privilege is inherited in his family. I believe it descends from father to son. Miss Gilfooly will doubtless find many strange customs in the islands. There are old traditions in all countries, you know, and the people guard them jealously. Ah," as Bert returned and placed a check before him. He wrote his name, carefully blotted it, and handed the check to Tessie.

Before Tessie could look at it, Granny had it in her fingers. If Ka-kee-ta was protector of the royal person Granny proposed to be the keeper of the royal purse.

"My soul and body!" she exclaimed when she saw the figures. "The good Lord sure has a friendly feeling for the Gilfoolys! We'll be able to board Ka-kee-ta and his ax at the Waloo Hotel. I'll be glad to move. It's mortifying to the Gilfooly pride to have newspaper reporters and newspaper photographers pointing out all the shabby places in the house. You'll let us know, Mr.

The Amazing Inheritance

Marvin, when that special representative comes to town? Tessie and I'll be getting ready for him."

"I'll let you know," promised Mr. Marvin. "And may I say," he took Tessie's little hand, "may I say that, in all my career as a lawyer, I never had a more romantic nor more interesting case than this. Most romantic and most interesting!" he repeated. "If you need any advice or any help, do not hesitate to call on us. Mr. Douglas will be glad to be of service to you at any time." He looked at Mr. Douglas, who had turned a delighted crimson at being assigned to such romantic and interesting service.

"I'll be glad to do anything I can!" he stammered.

"That's real kind," smiled Granny, while Tessie flushed and told him he was real kind, too. "You might go over to the Waloo and pick out a good room for us and one for Ka-tee-ka, while Tessie and I think about clothes. We can't appear in public in what we got. They wouldn't do credit to Pete. And these newspaper men would be sure to photograph us in our worst. We'll have to keep dressed up all the time now."

VIII

IF she lives to be a thousand, Tessie Gilfooly will never forget the day she spent shopping in the Evergreen. It was so vastly different from the days she had spent in the Evergreen selling aluminum.

"Get everything you want and what a queen should have," Mr. Kingley had said, even before he saw the check Mr. Marvin gave Tessie. "Shoes and hats and everything. Miss Morley will help you." And he sent for Miss Morley, who went to New York every month and had been to Paris twice, and so would know what queens should wear.

Tessie was considerably in awe of Miss Morley with her black hair swirled around her head, her face delicately painted, her black canton crepe—no cheap black sateen for Miss Morley—the latest thing in frocks. But Miss Morley was looking at her with such frank admiration that she dared to smile shyly as she blushed.

"It's awfully kind of you to help me," she even dared to say.

"I'll be glad to help you." Miss Morley smiled, too. "I never dressed a queen before, and it will be great fun. We'll begin at the very beginning

The Amazing Inheritance

because I expect that your underthings are no more royal than your outside clothes."

"I've always wanted silk things," apologized Tessie, her hands fluttering among the soft flesh-colored crepes and satins. She loved them. She wanted them all. She longed to feel the touch of them on her slim little body which had known only coarse cotton.

But Miss Morley pushed the lovely things contemptuously away. She even tilted her long aristocratic nose at them.

"They're all right for silly shopgirls and cheap persons," she declared scornfully, "but what a queen wants—oh, Rose, haven't you any linen, fine and sheer, hand-sewed and hand-hem-stitched?"

And when Miss Rose Beacon of the lingerie had produced a special box in which was linen, soft and fine, and enriched with much dainty hand-work, she drew a long breath.

"There!" She pushed the cobwebby things towards Tessie. "That's what queens wear!" She said it as positively as if she had dressed a queen every day of her life.

"But—" faltered Tessie, looking longingly at the flesh-colored satins and crepes.

"Half a dozen sets of these, Rose," ordered Miss Morley. "And as many gowns."

"And half a dozen sets of the satin, too," whispered Tessie, the minute Miss Morley turned her

The Amazing Inheritance

back. "I've always wanted silk underclothes, and now I'm going to have some even if all queens don't wear them. I guess I can afford them!"

It was the same all through the store. Tessie found what she had coveted and sighed over was not proper for a queen. She had to buy flat-heeled broad-toed shoes for walking, instead of the narrow-toed high heels for which her soul yearned.

"High heels for dress, low heels for the street. Don't ever make the mistake of wearing high heels on the street, Miss Gilfooly," advised Miss Morley. "They'll make you look cheap and common."

"No, ma'am," Tessie murmured meekly, but she privately resolved to wear her high heels when and where she pleased. Miss Morley would not be with her always. And how could high heels make any girl look cheap and common? They looked expensive and fine to Tessie's big blue eyes.

Miss Morley would not let her wear lace stockings with her street shoes, but demanded a plain heavy silk. The dark blue crepe frock which was finally chosen to cover the dainty camisole and plain dark blue bloomers, was as simple as a frock could be, but it was a French model and it made Tessie a very different girl from the one who had worn the old black sateen.

"Now," remarked Miss Morley when half a

The Amazing Inheritance

dozen frocks had been chosen, always the plainest and the simplest, "we'll go up to the third and have your hair dressed."

"I can do my own hair," Tessie exclaimed eagerly. She was aghast at the amount of money she had spent. Who ever would suppose that such plain things would cost so much?

"I said dressed," smiled Miss Morley. "You can do your hair like the shopgirls," she seemed to have a vast contempt for the way shopgirls dressed and did their hair, "but what you want is a simple coiffure—something royal!"

She told the astonished head of the hairdressing department what she thought would be simple and royal, and she stood beside Tessie while Mrs. Nelson took the buns from Tessie's ears, and redressed her hair in simple waves. Tessie had pretty hair with a soft natural curl in it, and she had a well-shaped head, although she had very successfully concealed that fact with her buns and her rolls. But the clever professional fingers made the most of her wavy hair and of the shape of her head.

"There!" Miss Morley approved of the result if Tessie did look at it a bit doubtfully and wonder if it could be all right. "Now for a manicure!"

When Miss Morley at last took Tessie down to show Mr. Kingley what could be done by the Evergreen, they met Mr. Bill on the threshold.

The Amazing Inheritance

He was trying to talk to Ka-kee-ta, who had reluctantly consented to wait for his queen in the office, and who only had grunts in answer to Mr. Bill's questions. Mr. Bill looked at Miss Morley and at Tessie. And he looked again at Tessie. *Was* it Tessie? Tessie blushed and dimpled.

"Well, I'll be darned!" he exclaimed unbelievably. "If it isn't Queen Teresa! You certainly make one sweet peach of a queen!" He was quite scarlet and somewhat incoherent in his admiration.

"Clothes do make a difference, don't they, Mr. Bill?" asked Miss Morley, proud of what she had made of Tessie. "She looks quite smart now, doesn't she? I've been working over her all morning."

"Good work!" approved Mr. Bill. "I'll say she looks all right!" And his hearty admiration deepened the color in Tessie's cheeks as well as in his own face. Imagine Mr. Bill saying that Tessie Gilfooly looked all right! No wonder Tessie's face was pink, and her eyes shone.

Mr. Kingley admired Tessie also and told Miss Morley that she had done well—remarkably well.

"I knew the Evergreen could outfit a woman for any position," he said with great satisfaction. "You selected other garments than what she is wearing?"

"You said to fit her out appropriately but not

The Amazing Inheritance

foolishly." Miss Morley repeated the orders she had received. "I have chosen a couple of afternoon frocks, dinner gowns and evening gowns and a little jersey and a serge for day wear."

"And hats?" suggested Mr. Kingley. "A queen can't wear her crown all the time." And he laughed at his joke.

"And hats." Miss Morley was polite enough and clever enough to laugh with him. "And shoes and everything. She has a very complete little outfit."

"That's good. That's very good. You might collect the gowns and hats, Miss Morley, and make a little exhibition of them to-morrow before they are delivered. Miss Gilfooly can wait a day longer for them, and our customers will be interested in a royal wardrobe. Have Miss Lee run a little story in the *Gazette*. It isn't every store," he told them proudly, "that could fit out a queen at a moment's notice. You arrange a little exhibition, Miss Morley, and we'll invite Waloo to come and see it. You'll like that, my dear," he told Tessie, who was not sure that she would like it at all.

Joe Cary, bringing a message to Mr. Kingley from Mr. Maltby, the assistant advertising manager, who had been discharged from his jury,

The Amazing Inheritance

most certainly did not like it and he dared to say so.

"Your clothes belong to you, Tess. Don't you make a show of them," he advised in a whisper.

Mr. Kingley went on talking, and he sounded as though he had heard Joe's whisper, although he never looked at Joe.

"A queen owes that sort of thing to her people. They want show and celebration and pageants in return for their money. You must expect that now you are a queen," he told Tessie.

"Huh," sniffed Joe, and he spoke louder than perhaps he meant to speak, for Mr. Kingley looked at him.

"What did you say, Cary?" he asked sharply.

"Here are those proofs from the *Gazette* for the wash-goods sale," he said. "And as for queens and kings, the fewer there are, the better the world will be."

"This is no place for anarchism, Cary," Mr. Kingley told him coldly. "Go and tell Mr. Maltby I want to see him at once. And, Cary, you might make a little sketch of Miss Gilfooly as she is now and Maltby can run it with a line—'Royalty Clothed by the Evergreen'—under it. It will please the people, my dear. They'll like to come and buy where queens buy," he said shrewdly.

"Huh!" muttered Joe. "Don't you let them

The Amazing Inheritance

make a monkey of you for the old Evergreen, Tess," he whispered, as he went for his pencil and drawing board, after he had mastered his impulse to "punch old Kingley in the snout."

But Tessie never heard him. Joe and his mutters were an old story, but a new and very fascinating tale was the admiration of Mr. Bill and his father. She gladly agreed to everything that Mr. Kingley suggested.

"Of course," went on Mr. Kingley, with the zeal of an artist who wanted his work to be quite perfect, "of course you don't know anything about royal etiquette."

"Perhaps I could get a book in the book department," suggested Tessie meekly. Mr. Kingley was right. She knew absolutely nothing of how a queen should conduct herself, but if the Evergreen could clothe royalty, surely it could tell a queen how to behave.

Mr. Kingley shook his head. He did not believe there was such a volume among the thousands of books in the big department. Miss Morley shook her head, too. Mr. Bill just stood and stared at Tessie.

"There's old Madame Cabot!" suggested Miss Morley suddenly. "She was presented at court when she was a girl, and her uncle was minister to Italy. I read it in the *Gazette* in the story on her seventieth birthday. She could tell Miss Gil-

The Amazing Inheritance

fooly the way the Queen of Italy did things. I should think that would help her."

"It undoubtedly would help her. You are very resourceful, Miss Morley—very resourceful." And Mr. Kingley showered Miss Morley with his august approval. "Bill, call up your mother and ask her to arrange to take Miss Gilfooly to see Madame Cabot as soon as possible."

"Shouldn't Madame Cabot call on the queen?" Mr. Bill did not want to take his eyes from Tessie to call up any one. He was perfectly satisfied to let matters remain as they were.

"Madame Cabot is an old lady, and under the circumstances I am sure that our queen will waive etiquette and go to her. It will be a great privilege to have her help. Madame Cabot is a great lady."

"I know!" Tessie was faint and breathless at the mere thought of going to see Madame Cabot. Tessie knew the aristocratic old lady by sight, but she had never sold her so much as a kitchen spoon. She was a little awed at the prospect of talking to her as queen to queen, but she bravely lifted her head and looked at Mr. Kingley. "It will be awfully kind of her to help me. I don't know anything," she admitted with a rosy shame which was adorable—at least, Mr. Bill thought it was adorable. "I had to leave school before I graduated from the high."

The Amazing Inheritance

"You can learn. You can have teachers and learn," advised Mr. Kingley. "And Madame Cabot can help you if she will."

"If she only will!" breathed Miss Morley, and for the first time since she had been with Tessie, she seemed envious. She had not envied Tessie her new clothes nor her throne, but she did seem to envy her the possibility of a talk with Madame Cabot. "She knows! She has the most perfect manners! You'll be helped just by looking at her," she told Tessie.

Mr. Bill jeered. "That old dame," he began, but he was not allowed to go any farther.

"My son!" rebuked his scandalized father.

"Mr. Bill!" exclaimed Miss Morley, so aghast that her delicately tinted face acquired a lavender tint.

"Oh, all right," Mr. Bill said carelessly. "Only if you want my opinion, which of course isn't worth a bean to you, you'll leave Miss Gilfooly alone. She's all right as she is! My word, I should think she was! I suppose Madame Cabot is all right, too, but she's old and our little queen is young. What is all right for an old lady might be all wrong for a young one!"

Tessie's pink face grew pinker. She had not a word to say, she could only blush and dimple until Mr. Bill blushed, too.

The Amazing Inheritance

"You call up your mother!" ordered Mr. Kingley curtly.

Tessie could scarcely breathe when Mr. Bill put her in the limousine beside his mother, while Ka-kee-ta slipped into the front seat, although the chauffeur looked at him out of the corner of a most scornful eye. Mr. Bill's mother was so proud and so haughty that Tessie had never expected to ride with her. Mrs. Kingley had never been in the hardware department while Tessie had been there, and Tessie had had only an occasional glimpse of her when she had been sent up from the basement on some errand. She had never imagined that she would ever be on friendly terms with her, and yet Mrs. Kingley seemed quite friendly. She smiled pleasantly—even cordially.

"And this is our little queen! No, Bill, your father would not want you to come with us! Surely you have work to do here!"

"Take Miss Gilfooly home to dinner, and I'll go back and see if I can find anything to do," suggested Mr. Bill, showing his firm white teeth in an appealing grin.

"Bill! I expect the queen has a dinner engagement." But Tessie hadn't, and she managed to gather breath and courage to say so. "Well, we will see," Mrs. Kingley promised Mr. Bill, "Madame Cabot is expecting us," she told Tessie as they drove away and left Mr. Bill standing

The Amazing Inheritance

somewhat disconsolate on the curb. "How romantic it is! I expect you are quite excited? It is enough to excite any girl to be told that she is a queen. I remember I saw Queen Mary once—of England, you know—before the war. She was riding in a coach with outriders, and it made Bill and me think of a circus parade. I must say she looked a frump. You are very well turned out, my dear. You look quite as a queen should look." And she frankly approved of the quiet little hat and plain frock Miss Morley had chosen.

"I got them at the Evergreen. Mr. Kingley has been so kind," Tessie told Mr. Kingley's wife gratefully.

Mrs. Kingley smiled knowingly. "I expect Mr. Kingley knows what he is about. It pleased him immensely to have all those stories about you and the Evergreen in the newspapers. I tell Mr. Kingley that's what he lives for—the Evergreen. By the way, don't be nervous if Madame Cabot is a little severe. You must remember that you are a queen and hold up your head," she advised, as they stopped before the old mansion where Madame Cabot had lived for almost half a century.

Madame Cabot was not a bit severe. It pleased her to be interested in this new royalty, and she searched her memory for any reminiscence which would help Tessie.

The Amazing Inheritance

"But the etiquette of your islands will be so different from anything I have known, that I doubt if I can be of much assistance to you," she said slowly. "Be simple and honest, my dear. That will be your best rule. Don't claim to know more than you do. Your people will understand that you were not brought up to be a queen, and they will not expect you to know their customs and manners. Tell them frankly that you are ignorant, but that you want to learn. That is by far the best way. Don't you think so, Mrs. Kingley?"

"Oh, quite," agreed Mrs. Kingley, unobtrusively pinching herself to make sure that she really was there talking to Madame Cabot about the proper behavior of queens. It was so unbelievable that she had to give herself quite a sharp pinch to be quite sure.

And while the two older women talked of queens and their behavior, Tessie looked around the old-fashioned room and drank her tea from the thin china cups, and wished that the sandwiches were larger, for she was hungry, and of course, a queen would never take but one sandwich no matter how small it was.

"You have been so kind," she said shyly to Madame Cabot, when the audience was over. "I shan't ever forget how kind you have been. And I shall try and remember to be honest and simple,"

The Amazing Inheritance

she promised from the bottom of her grateful heart. She thought she could manage to do that, and she was very grateful to Madame Cabot for so easy a rule. She had been afraid that Madame Cabot would tell her of hard things she would have to do. But any one could be simple and honest.

And Madame Cabot, the great and exclusive Madame Cabot, was touched by her humble appreciation and by the shy wistfulness in her rosy face.

"Bless the child!" she exclaimed quite as Granny might have exclaimed, and she stooped and kissed Tessie's pink cheek. "You must come and see me again. I like young people—especially pretty young girls."

Mrs. Kingley purred. She knew, if Tessie did not, what an invitation from Madame Cabot meant. "I am going to take her home with me," she told Madame Cabot almost proudly. "Just a little family dinner."

IX

THE story of Queen Teresa appeared in the *Gazette*. It seemed to splash all over the front page. There was the picture of Tessie in her black frock at the aluminum, there was a cut of a tropical island overgrown with gigantic palm trees, and in the corner was the drawing of Tessie with a crown on her head and seated in a big carved chair under a huge palm tree, receiving the homage of a throng of people in queer costumes—or in no costumes at all.

"We'll cut this out and keep it, Tessie," Granny said, proud that the Gilfoolys occupied so much of the front page of Waloo's most important newspaper. "Maybe some day you'll like to read it again."

Granny read it any number of times and obtained much information from the article on the Sunshine Islands, for the reporter had borrowed Tessie's library books in which none of the Gilfoolys had had time to look.

"I don't know how I'm going to like this kingdom of yours, Tessie." Granny looked over her glasses at the young queen, who was trying on a new frock before the full-length mirror in their suite at the Waloo Hotel. "Raw fish they eat,

The Amazing Inheritance

and their gravy's made out of sea water and lemon juice and cocoanut milk. Sounds like a mess to me! And the best people don't seem to eat chicken. They eat pork. I don't know how I'm going to like it."

Tessie turned away from the long mirror which had reflected a charming little creature in a smart frock of blue taffeta, and hugged her grandmother. Much she cared about gravy. But there was still considerable awe in her voice as she cried, "Granny! can you believe it? Isn't it too wonderful?" Her voice shook with the wonder of it. Her whole body trembled as she pressed close to Granny.

"There, there!" Granny patted her cheek. "It's all true enough. You've only got to look at Ka-kee-ta and smell that cocoanut oil he pours over his head to know it's true. It makes me more nervous to have him always standing at the front door with his meat ax than it does to be alone with that Tear of God. Protector, indeed! I guess Johnny could protect us all we need protecting. Or Joe Cary! I didn't feel right, Tessie, to go off and leave Joe Cary alone in the old house, but he wouldn't come with us and there wasn't room for Ka-kee-ta there, and so there wasn't anything else to do. And that's another thing that makes me wonder about this new job of yours, Tessie. What kind of a country is it

The Amazing Inheritance

where the queen has to have a man with a meat ax to protect her?"

Tessie laughed and hugged her grandmother again. "Silly old dear!" she said lovingly. "Mr. Douglas explained it all to me. There isn't any necessity now, Granny, or at least he doesn't think there is. It's just a custom. Once upon a time it was necessary, Mr. Douglas said, for the king to have a bodyguard to protect him from his enemies, but now it's probably just a custom. Anyway, I haven't any enemies," she finished triumphantly.

"Gracious, I should hope not! And I hope to goodness Mr. Douglas knows what he's talking about and it is only a custom," grumbled Granny. "It don't sound good to me, but I'm old-fashioned and maybe it's all right. It certainly did make folks stare when we walked into the Evergreen with Ka-tee-ta walking behind us with his meat ax. I guess everybody in the store knew you was somebody with Mr. Kingley and his son and all the clerks a-hanging around!" She laughed happily as she recalled the pleasant experience. "And that lady they called the advertising — what was she doing here last night, Tessie?"

"She came to help me look over my mail." Tessie sighed as she remembered her mail. "I never could have done it alone, Granny."

"You poor child!" sympathized Granny, as

The Amazing Inheritance

she too visualized Tessie's mail, which had been brought to her in a huge clothes-basket.

The publication in the *Gazette* of the romantic story of the queen who was found in the basement of the Evergreen, had been the signal for an army to take to typewriters and pens, at least it seemed as if it must have taken an army to write the enormous number of letters which had been addressed to Queen Teresa, or to Miss Teresa Gilfooly, Queen, or to Her Majesty, Miss Gilfooly.

There were seventy-three proposals of marriage from men who stated that they were willing to be kings, and that they were strong and fearless and would help Queen Teresa govern her kingdom. There were innumerable letters from automobile dealers, florists, dressmakers, shoemakers, milliners, jewelers, stationers, real estate dealers, railroad and steamship agents, caterers, architects, house decorators, dancing teachers. Indeed every one who was in business in Waloo wasted no time in calling Queen Teresa's attention to the fact and to the knowledge that he was eager to serve her, and the sooner the better.

There were letters from philanthropic organizations asking the queen's patronage for orphanages and old peoples' homes. There were letters from girls who wanted to be singers or dancers, and from boys who wanted to be painters or poets

The Amazing Inheritance

and who asked for loans from the royal treasury. There were letters from people who wanted mortgages raised and doctors paid or victrolas bought.

And here came a boy with another basket filled with mail. It was too provoking. If Tessie read half of them she would have time for nothing else. And after the first basketful, the reading of the letters was a stupid task. You can understand why Tessie looked at them in horror and despair.

"You'll have to get a secretary," grinned Mr. Bill, who had brought Tessie a huge bunch of violets, "or throw them out. They aren't worth reading. Throw them out!"

"I can't do that," frowned Tessie, her nose buried in the violets. "It wouldn't be right. There might be something in one of them, you know, something I should know about." Tessie showed every symptom of taking her royal duties seriously. "Mr. Marvin said Mr. Douglas could help me. Perhaps——"

"Bert!" interrupted Mr. Bill quickly. "Bert couldn't help you in this sort of a job." Mr. Bill was quite sure that Bert would be worse than useless. "You want to have a woman. Miss Lee helped you yesterday, didn't she? I expect Dad would let you have her again. You know her and you like her?" Tessie nodded, and her face brightened. She would like to have Norah Lee help her. Norah was not a stranger. "Just

The Amazing Inheritance

chuck the stuff away and let Miss Lee look after it and come with me for a spin around the lakes. You'll be sick if you stay cooped up here all day. Come on! Just the two of us!" he coaxed.

Tessie hesitated, and you know what happens when people hesitate. She allowed Mr. Bill to push the big basket full of letters under the table and ran to put on her hat. Just outside the door stood Ka-kee-ta, an object of terror to the hotel staff and of pride to the hotel guests. He drew himself up as Tessie came out with Mr. Bill and raising his ax to his shoulder fell in behind them. Mr. Bill stopped.

"The queen won't need you, Ka-kee-ta," he said carelessly. "I'll look after her."

"Yes, Ka-kee-ta, you can take a rest," smiled Tessie.

"Glad to be rid of him for awhile?" grinned Mr. Bill, as he followed Tessie into the elevator. "Hello!" as they shot down and passed another cage shooting up. "There is our friend Douglas going up to see you."

"Oh!" And as the elevator stopped at the office floor Tessie hesitated. "Perhaps I should go back? Perhaps he has come to tell me that the special representative has come from the islands? Perhaps——"

"That's enough of perhappses." Mr. Bill dared to put his hand on her arm. When he was with

The Amazing Inheritance

Tessie he frequently forgot that she was a queen and that he was only a floorwalker in the Evergreen. "What do you care? It won't hurt your special representative to wait for you. You have had to wait for him. Come on! I dare you!"

Again Tessie hesitated, and then she laughed softly and walked down the corridor with Mr. Bill. All around her she heard whispers. "That's Queen Teresa! She used to sell face cream at the Evergreen and now she's Queen of the Sunshine Islands!" It was exciting if it was not altogether truthful.

When they reached the curb where Mr. Bill's car was parked, and Tessie was settled on the front seat, there at her side, his hand on the door, was Ka-kee-ta, ax and all.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Tessie. "Couldn't a queen ever go anywhere with a gentleman friend?" She looked at Mr. Bill for an answer to her unuttered question.

Mr. Bill frowned at the royal bodyguard. "Look here, Ka-kee-ta," he said sharply, "didn't I tell you that I would take care of the queen?"

Much Ka-kee-ta cared what Mr. Bill had said. He arranged himself in a graceful loop on the running board, close to Tessie's elbow, and there was every indication that he meant to stay there as long as Tessie remained in the car.

"Oh, dear!" Tessie was almost in tears. What a lot queens did have to endure!

The Amazing Inheritance

"Here!" Mr. Bill threw open the door of the tonneau. "If you will insist on going where you're not wanted, sit there!" And he waved his hand toward the rear seat.

With a look that measured the distance between the front seat and the back, Ka-kee-ta stepped into the car and settled himself with a grunt. He held his ax straight before him. He did look so silly that he made Tessie feel silly, too. She wanted to cry.

"Comfy?" Mr. Bill asked tenderly, as he put his finger on the self-starter.

She stopped wanting to cry because she discovered that she wanted to smile. "Awfully comfy! But I do hate to be tagged around by 'that' all the time!" And she frowned as she jerked her head back to indicate the watchful bodyguard.

"We'll forget all about him. And about queens, too, shall we?" As he bent to hear her answer, he all but ran into a car which had raced toward them.

With a snarl Ka-kee-ta was on his feet, his ax suspended over Mr. Bill's head.

"Ka-kee-ta!" Tessie grasped his arm and held it with all of her might.

"What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Bill with a deep breath. "That was a close shave. Looked as if that machine was deliberately trying to run

The Amazing Inheritance

us down. But we're all right, aren't we?" He saw that Tessie was all right. "Sit down, old friend!" he said to Ka-kee-ta, "and watch your ax. I'd kill myself before I'd let anything happen to your queen. I mean that!" he told Tessie in a husky voice.

"You're awfully kind," murmured Tessie, her heart beating so fast and so loud that she was sure Mr. Bill must hear it.

"I wish you weren't a queen!" Mr. Bill exclaimed impulsively.

"Why?" Tessie's eyes widened.

"Why? Do you like to have Ka-kee-ta trailing you all the time?" He gave her just one reason why she might wish she were not a queen.

"No, but I like to be a queen," she answered truthfully.

"I suppose a girl would," in disgust. "We could have a lot more fun if you were just a—just a—"

"Nobody!" Tessie finished the sentence for him. "But when I was a nobody, Mr. Bill, you never saw me! You never knew I was on earth until I was a queen!"

"That isn't fair!" stammered Mr. Bill, when he was confronted with the truth. "That isn't fair!"

"It's true, isn't it?" demanded Tessie triumphantly. "I should say I am glad I'm a queen!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"So I would know you are on earth?" asked Mr. Bill softly, and quite forgetting the gulf which is supposed to yawn between queens and floorwalkers.

But Tessie would not admit that that was the reason she was glad to be a queen. No girl would.

"The idea!" she said instead, and sat up straighter and refused to exchange tender glances with him. "Is this a good car?" she asked in a most matter-of-fact voice. "I have to buy a car, and I don't know which is a good one."

"I do!" exclaimed Mr. Bill emphatically. "And I'll help you buy a car. I'll help you do anything!" And he might have dared to put his hand on the royal fingers, they were so soft and white as they rested on her knee beside him, but a snarl from the rear made him realize that Ka-kee-ta's eyes were watchful. "I wish we could lose him," he grumbled.

"So do I," agreed Tessie heartily.

But Ka-kee-ta snarled louder and jumped to his feet and stared at a car which had come so close to them that it had almost scraped their fender. He waved his ax wildly.

"The shark!" he shouted. "The shark!"

Mr. Bill stopped his car dead. "What do you mean?" he demanded. "What do you mean?"

"The shark!" squealed Ka-kee-ta with another flourish of his ax.

The Amazing Inheritance

"That's what the man we found on the porch said!" exclaimed Tessie anxiously. "What do you suppose he means?" And when Mr. Bill could not tell her she turned to Ka-kee-ta. "What do you mean, Ka-kee-ta?"

The car which had all but scraped their fender, turned a corner and was out of sight.

"The shark," mumbled Ka-kee-ta, and dropped back in his place.

"Well, I'll be darned!" muttered Mr. Bill, as he started his engine. "What did he mean? He couldn't see any shark, could he? What did he mean?"

But Ka-kee-ta refused to tell them why he had jumped up and shouted. He sulked and fiddled with his ax, and at last they left him alone.

"There are so many things I don't understand," sighed Tessie. "I—I don't know what I would do if I didn't have you to help me. Sometimes I wish the police hadn't been so quick about letting that other man go. It must mean something when two black men talk about a shark, mustn't it?" She turned a troubled face to Mr. Bill.

"They sound and look to me more like a fraternity initiation than anything else," said puzzled Mr. Bill. "Perhaps they don't mean what we mean when we say 'shark.' Perhaps 'shark' is the Sunshine Island word for hello!"

"Oh!" Tessie looked up at him with eyes full

The Amazing Inheritance

of wonder and admiration. "I do think you are the most wonderful man in the world! No one else would ever have thought of that!"

"Oh, I don't know," Mr. Bill murmured modestly. "But it might be true, you know."

"I'm sure it's true!" exclaimed Tessie eagerly.

X

TESSIE really did not think much about Ka-kee-ta and his excited exclamations. She had too much to do to guess conundrums. Never was there a busier queen. The publicity the newspapers gave her brought new duties every day.

"You can't refuse," Norah Lee told her firmly. Norah had been loaned to the Sunshine Islands by the Evergreen and was taking her new work very seriously. "You want to advertise your kingdom, don't you? Make people know about it? I dare say there are thousands in Waloo this minute who have never heard of it, in spite of the corking stories the newspapers are giving you. Every one doesn't read every paper, and if you aren't in all the papers some people will miss knowing about you. It's your duty as a queen to make the Sunshine Islands the most talked about place in the world."

Put that way Tessie could not refuse, and she graciously permitted herself to be photographed and interviewed until every daily newspaper made a story of Queen Teresa and her islands as much a part of its daily routine as the sport page or the stock reports. "Our Queen," the *Gazette* proudly

The Amazing Inheritance

called her, because she had made her first appearance in the *Gazette*.

She kept her promise to Mr. Kingley, and with Ka-kee-ta—his ax polished to silver brightness—stood in the basement of the Evergreen behind the familiar counter stocked high with aluminum. She might be the same little Tessie at heart, but outwardly there was a vast difference. She looked like a princess playing at being a salesgirl for her gown was of black silk crepe instead of cheap sateen, her hair was done in the simple fashion approved by Miss Morley, and at Mr. Kingley's request around her neck hung the Tear of God in its fiber lace. No one scolded her if she made a mistake. Indeed, Mr. Kingley had craftily minimized her chance to make a mistake by decreeing that she should only take the order and hand the parcel to the purchaser, the other girls could make out the sales-slips. And the basement was mobbed with purchasers.

"She's doing it for the shoe fund of her new kingdom," was a whisper frequently heard among them. "And no wonder!" would be the sympathetic rejoinder when Ka-kee-ta's bare feet were seen.

"I'll keep this all my life!" exclaimed a well-cushioned, warm-hearted woman. "I'll hand it down to my grandchildren," she promised tearfully. "To think a real queen sold it to me!"

"You're such a beautiful queen!" wept another

The Amazing Inheritance

emotional creature. "I read every word about you!"

Norah Lee watched the crowd from a sheltered corner, where Joe Cary found her.

"Hello!" he said. "Can't keep away from the old home, can you? May I say we miss you like the dickens up on the fifth." And he grinned as if he had missed her.

"I'm glad," Nora said simply, although she flushed a bit. "One likes to be missed. You are getting mighty good publicity these days. The Evergreen is all over all the papers."

"Don't blame me," begged Joe. "I don't believe in exploiting a little girl even if she is unfortunate enough to be the queen of a cannibal island, and even if it does put the Evergreen all over all the papers. I have a conscience tucked away somewhere about me!" he told her proudly, as if a conscience was a rare and valuable treasure. "How do you like your new job?" he asked curiously.

She laughed. She was a tall slim girl with jolly brown eyes and a jolly laugh. She and Joe had been in the same office for a year and Joe admired her immensely, but Norah thought her work was the most important thing in the world. She had not been pleased when she was loaned to the Queen of the Sunshine Islands, but the first basketful of mail had interested her, and she was still interested in the strange letters which came to

The Amazing Inheritance

Queen Teresa. So she laughed when Joe asked her about her new job.

"It is amusing," she said. "And surprising. I never knew there were so many people who want something for nothing. Miss Gilfooly is a dear little thing, isn't she? She accepts all the attention and admiration she is receiving without a question. She hasn't an analytical mind, has she? She never questions, she just accepts. I can't understand that! I would be just one huge interrogation point. The whole thing is so strange that sometimes I wonder—" She hesitated and looked oddly at Joe.

Joe looked oddly at her. "Sometimes I wonder, too," he said. "I don't understand it at all, but I'll tell you this, Miss Lee, if any one tries to play tricks on Tessie Gilfooly, he will have to answer to me!"

She nodded. "You're in love with her, aren't you?" As soon as the words slipped over her lips she turned crimson and stammered. "I beg your pardon! Don't tell me, please! It isn't any of my business!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed straightforward Joe. "I would just as soon tell the world. Of course I'm in love with her and with Granny and Johnny, the best of Boy Scouts. And that's why I say if any one gets gay with Tessie, I'll have something to say."

"Would you dare?" She seemed pleased to

The Amazing Inheritance

hear that he was in love with Granny and Johnny as well as with Tessie. But she looked not at Joe, but at the owner of the Evergreen, who had come down to the basement to watch a queen sell his aluminum.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Joe again. "You bet I'd dare! I'm not going to stay here all my life anyway. I've got a chance to go in with the World Wide Agency, and I guess that will push me ahead faster than the Evergreen. I'm just waiting until this queen business is over, and then I'll leave."

"Oh!" Norah Lee stared at him with big covetous eyes. "The World Wide!" She was frankly and honestly envious. "But if Miss Gilfooly goes to the Sunshine Islands?"

He laughed strangely. "Sometimes I wonder if there are any Sunshine Islands," he said scornfully, although he had read several of Tessie's library books and knew very well that there were Sunshine Islands, six of them.

"Why—why—" she stammered. "What do you mean?" She was so eager to hear what he meant that she drew closer, and Mr. Kingley found them with their heads together in business hours.

"Come, come, Cary!" he said sharply. "Have you finished that sketch?" For he had sent Joe to the basement to sketch the queen, not to talk to the queen's secretary.

Mr. Kingley was proud of his business acumen

The Amazing Inheritance

as he looked around the crowded basement. It was not every man who would have secured so much publicity in the discovery of a queen in a store basement. And how the store would benefit by his broad vision! There would not be enough aluminum in the Evergreen or in the city even, if the demand kept increasing as it had increased since the sale began. Tessie would have to shift to granite wear, and the excited women, who pressed so close to her, would never know the difference, although he would have the change announced in Mr. Walker's loudly penetrating voice. Mr. Kingley especially approved of Kake-ta and his ax. They seemed to give an atmosphere of reality to the royalty in the Evergreen basement. Yes, the store would profit immensely by this sale. And Tessie would do well, too. She would have some more of that wonderful free publicity. He would guarantee that it would be nation-wide. And her per cent of the sales, small as he had been able to make it, would give her a good sum for the shoe fund for the orphans of the Sunshine Islands.

"Choose something for the kids," Norah Lee had advised when they had talked of the beneficiary. "Children appeal to every one, and you'll arouse more interest if you announce that you are selling aluminum to help the orphans of the islands than if you let it be whispered about that you are doing it to advertise Mr. Kingley."

The Amazing Inheritance

So Tessie smiled and handed out parcel after parcel until one o'clock, when Mr. Bill appeared, as the hour struck, to take her home. He grinned at the crowd and diffidently suggested that Tessie would lunch with him. Tessie drew a deep breath and tried to keep the rapid beating of her heart out of her voice.

"Oh!" she exclaimed softly. "Could we have it here?" For never, in the many months she had been at the Evergreen, had she been able to eat as much as a bowl of chicken soup in the blue-and-gold tea-room on the fifth floor. Prices were too high and Tessie's finances were too low. She could obtain more for her fifteen or twenty cents at the cafeteria in the next block, but that fact only made her more eager to lunch at the Evergreen. Her little face turned quite pink as she spoke of it.

"Sure we can!" declared Mr. Bill, proud to have the Evergreen chosen, and proud of Tessie for choosing it. "I wish," he added frankly, "that we could dispense with the bodyguard!" He looked scornfully at Ka-kee-ta, although Ka-kee-ta had attracted almost as much attention as his royal mistress. "Isn't the store detective enough?" he grinned.

"I should hope so," sighed Tessie, and she frowned and turned her back to her bodyguard. "It does seem as if I didn't need to be protected when I'm with friends. I hate it!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"Of course you do. But wait a minute! I have an idea!" He scowled as he developed his idea, and then began to issue orders. "Miss Lee," he said crisply, "you take Ka-kee-ta home. I'll bring Miss Gilfooly later." He turned to Ka-kee-ta and spoke as a general in command of an army. "Go with Miss Lee. Your queen orders it. I will guard her. Come on," he told Tessie. "Let's get a move on before he realizes he is going to be left behind."

She snatched her gloves and bag from the arrogant cashgirl, who had stood beside her to hold them, and ran away with him, the proudest, happiest queen in the world, while Norah Lee, sympathetic and resourceful, diverted Ka-kee-ta's attention by leading him to a rack where there was a splendid array of axes of all kinds. Ka-kee-ta had never seen so many. His eyes glistened, and he never noticed that his queen had slipped away.

Tessie's eyes glistened, too. To think that she was to lunch with Mr. Bill in the Evergreen tea-room. She could scarcely believe it, even when she was seated at a round table in a corner of the room with Mr. Bill smiling triumphantly at her.

"Well!" he exclaimed proudly. "I managed that all right!"

Tessie smiled at him. "You're wonderful!" she said slowly, as if the words were sweet to her quivering lips.

The Amazing Inheritance

They were sweet to Mr. Bill's ears, also, and he blushed awkwardly. "Not half as wonderful as you are," he stammered. "You—you're adorable, you know!" And he gazed deep into her big blue eyes.

"Have you given your order?" asked a waitress crisply, for patrons were patrons, and orders were that no one was to be allowed to linger during the rush hour, every one was to be hurried through.

"All right," mumbled Mr. Bill, when he was reminded that he was in the tea-room instead of in Paradise. "What will you have?" he asked Tessie, and the worshiping note in his voice made the waitress turn a bright and vivid green with envy.

"You choose," begged Tessie in a shaking voice. She was afraid of a menu card, and she would far rather listen to Mr. Bill order anything than brave its dangers.

"I'll give you what my sister likes," suggested Mr. Bill after a fruitless effort to find food suitable for royalty. "I suppose all girls like the same things." He gave the order to the waitress, and finished it with a snap which meant, "Now, for heaven's sake, go away and leave us alone."

Every one in the big blue-and-gold room knew that the pretty young girl at the corner table with the son of the owner of the Evergreen, was the Queen of the Sunshine Islands, and many admir-

The Amazing Inheritance

ing and more envious glances were cast toward her. There was not a girl there who would have refused to give her dearest possessions, all of her possessions, to step into Tessie's shoes, the high-heeled, narrow-toed shoes Tessie wore in defiance of Miss Morley's earnest advice. Think of being a queen and of lunching with young Bill Kingley! Surely the gods crammed the measure full to overflowing for some people. And although the room was decorated entirely in blue and gold it seemed all green, and far more anarchists went out of it that day than had come into it.

Before Tessie and Mr. Bill had reached the nut ice cream with hot chocolate sauce which was the beloved of Mr. Bill's sister, there was a stir and a bustle and Ka-kee-ta shot into the room, breathing hard and glaring defiance at the head waitress, who had vainly tried to persuade him to check his ax at the door. With a snort of satisfaction, he slipped behind Tessie's chair.

"Oh, dear!" Tessie was almost in tears. "Here he is again!"

"We had a few minutes alone," reminded Mr. Bill, trying to believe that half a loaf of bread is considerably better than no bread. "Why did you come back, Ka-kee-ta?" he asked the body-guard sternly. "Didn't I tell you I would look after the queen?"

"The Tear of God," rumbled Ka-kee-ta, as if

The Amazing Inheritance

the Tear of God was all that counted and queens were less than nothing. "The Tear of God!"

Tessie's hand went involuntarily to her neck. The Tear of God was there. What did Ka-kee-ta mean?

"The shark!" muttered Ka-kee-ta, and he shook his head and flourished his ax, and muttered words in a strange tongue.

It was just as well for "the shark," whoever he was, that he was not in the Evergreen tea-room at that moment, for Ka-kee-ta would have made short work of him. He growled and rumbled fiercely.

"I wish I knew what he meant!" murmured Tessie, for she felt that she should know what her bodyguard meant.

But Mr. Bill, wonderful as he was, could not tell her. He could only look at her and say again that she was adorable. Tessie moved impatiently. Joe Cary would have told her what Ka-kee-ta meant. Joe always had an answer when she questioned him. Could it be possible that Mr. Bill was not as clever as Joe Cary? But of course he was! Mr. Bill was quite the most wonderful man in the world. She smiled at him shyly.

XI

KA-KEE-TA with his ax and a proud tilt to his frizzled head became a familiar sight in Waloo. He caused more excitement and roused more interest than the queen.

"Bring your bodyguard with you," begged the president of the Home for Aged Women, when Tessie consented to appear at an entertainment the directors had arranged to increase its revenue.

"And do please have your picturesque guard come, too," coaxed the committee from the Junior League, which had invited Tessie to open the ball which the League gave every year to raise funds for its philanthropic work.

So Ka-kee-ta, in his blue clothes, his hair freshly oiled, his tattooed face oiled also, so that he was redolent of rancid cocoanut, his ax in his hand, stood in the back of the royal box, where Granny, in smart black lace and jet beads, and Johnny, in a new scout uniform, and Tessie, wearing a wonderful dancing frock of blue and silver, were the cynosure of all eyes.

When Tessie was asked by a giggling committee if she wished to follow the royal custom and choose her partners, she had blushed and exclaimed fervently, "Gracious! I should say not! I want to be just like the other girls!"

The Amazing Inheritance

There was a rush when her wish was made known, for every man in the ballroom wanted to be able to tell his friends that he had danced with a queen. Granny beamed at the pushing throng.

"The Gilfoolys always stood well with their friends," she said to no less a person than Mr. Kingley, who had stopped for a word with his former humble employee, and who remained to listen to Granny as she bragged of the Gilfoolys.

Tessie had never imagined there were so many attractive men in the world as she met at the Junior League ball. She was unable to dance a dozen steps with one before another cut in. It was confusing, if flattering, and she gave a little sigh of relief when Bert Douglas swung her through a doorway into a little ante-room.

"Lucky for me I know this place as well as my hat," grinned Bert, when he and Tessie were seated on a red velvet sofa. "Say," he went on even more radiantly, "is this evening real? Am I actually twosing here with a queen?"

"It doesn't seem real, does it?" murmured Tessie, her eyes shining.

"I hope that special representative never comes," went on Bert. "I'll hate to have you go to the Sunshine Islands!"

"I'll hate to go," confessed Tessie. She could never tell him how she would hate to leave Waloo. "I'm having such a good time here!"

"There was a funny thing happened to-day,"

The Amazing Inheritance

Bert said lazily. "Did Mr. Marvin tell you about it? A man came into the office and wanted to buy your kingdom."

"My kingdom!" Tessie was astonished and indignant. The idea of any one wanting to buy her kingdom before she had seen it.

"Yes. The Sunshine Islands. He said you might as well sell them because a white woman would never be allowed to reign over them."

"The idea!" Tessie was on her feet staring at him. "The very idea! I guess if my Uncle Pete could reign over them, Granny and Johnny and I can look after them! What did Mr. Marvin say?"

"He said he would take the matter under advisement and present it to you. That doesn't mean anything," he added hastily—for Tessie frowned and exclaimed again, "The very idea!"—"It's what lawyers always say. They have to say something!"

"I don't like it! I mean I don't like any one wanting to buy my islands. You can tell Mr. Marvin that the very first thing in the morning. The Sunshine Islands aren't for sale!"

"I was a fool to speak of it," mumbled Bert regretfully. He had not thought that she would be so concerned. "And don't think about it again. No one can buy your islands if you won't sell them, you know. That's a peach of a frock!" He changed the subject abruptly and gazed admir-

The Amazing Inheritance

ingly at Tessie's blue-and-silver dancing frock. "And awfully becoming!" His admiration shifted to her puzzled little face. "You look like a—a—" he stammered as he tried to tell Tessie what she resembled—"a dream!" he finally decided. "Is that the royal jewel?" He bent forward to look at the Tear of God as it hung around Tessie's white neck. "Some pearl, isn't it?"

Tessie shook her head. "I have to wear it, but I don't like it, not a bit. It's beautiful, of course, and different, but it makes me think of all the kings and queens who must have worn it. I don't mind Uncle Pete, but some of those old cannibals before Uncle Pete civilized the islands make me shiver. But if I don't wear it Ka-kee-ta has a fit. H-sh! Some one is looking for me!" For in the hall she heard a voice call, "Tessie! Tessie! Where has the child gone?"

And there in the doorway stood Granny in her black lace and jet, as fine a Gilfooly as ever was.

"Tessie, Tessie," she scolded. "This is no way for a queen to behave. Queens don't go lalligaging with lawyers! They have to stay where folks can see them. Come right back to the ball-room with me. Ka-kee-ta has been in such a way. He missed you at once and made such a fuss I had to look for you."

"I wish Ka-kee-ta was in the Pacific Ocean," murmured Tessie, as she meekly followed Granny, for well she knew that Granny only told the

The Amazing Inheritance

truth when she said that queens did not lalligag with young lawyers.

"You've got a nerve, Bert Douglas!" exclaimed Mr. Bill, who met them at the ballroom door. "What do you mean by running away with Her Majesty? You should be shot at sunrise!"

"Shoot if you please!" Bert looked triumphantly at Mr. Bill. "The queen and I had our little tête-à-two. Didn't we, Miss Golfolly?"

"You must dance with every one," scolded Granny. "You can't pick and choose." Her fingers straightened the lace shoulder-straps of Tessie's frock.

"What's the good of being a queen," muttered Tessie, but she sounded more rebellious than she acted. She obediently danced with every one.

It was not until the ball was over, and a maid was throwing her wrap of velvet and fur over her shoulders that she missed something. She put her hand to her neck. Where was the Tear of God? The royal jewel no longer hung from her white neck. She turned deathly pale and ran from the coatroom.

"Mr. Bill! Mr. Douglas!" she stammered. "I've been robbed!"

"Robbed!" They gathered about her. It was true. They could see for themselves that the royal jewel was no longer around her neck.

"You never left the room but once," Mr. Bill remembered quickly. "And Bert was with you!"

The Amazing Inheritance

Bert bristled indignantly. "What do you mean?" he wanted to know at once.

"The pearl was taken while Miss Gilfooly was dancing, or it dropped from her neck. You know where you took her. Suppose you look there," suggested Mr. Bill.

For a moment Bert looked as if he would refuse to follow Mr. Bill's suggestion, but if Mr. Bill meant what he said he meant, and not what Bert might think he meant, there was nothing to resent, and Bert hurried to the ante-room, keeping a sharp lookout in the corridor. He examined the ante-room carefully. He even slipped his hand down back of the seat of the red velvet sofa where he and Tessie had had such a pleasant little chat. He found several hairpins, a button, a nickel, and two dusty lemon drops, but not one pearl. He had to go back to Tessie empty-handed. There were tears in her eyes.

"I don't dare tell Granny," she gulped. "She'll think I've been careless. And Ka-kee-tal!" She was frightened when she remembered Ka-kee-ta and his shining ax. "What do they do to queens who lose the crown jewels?" she wailed.

Mr. Bill put his hand on her arm. "Buck up," he begged earnestly. "It must be somewhere! We'll find it. Don't you worry! Who could have taken it?"

That was the question. Who could have taken it? A sudden thought made Tessie clutch Mr.

The Amazing Inheritance

Bill's sleeve, and stare at him and at Bert with frightened eyes.

"You know," she said, the words treading on each other in their haste to be spoken, "that there is a party in the Sunshine Islands that doesn't want me to be the queen! And you know the natives are awfully superstitious and won't have anybody for their ruler unless he has the Tear of God. Do you suppose one of those rebels could have been here to-night and stolen the jewel so that the natives will refuse to have me for their queen?" Her blue eyes were very, very big and frightened, and her face was very white.

"Well, I'll be darned!" muttered Mr. Bill.

"That's it! That's it!" cried Bert eagerly. "You remember that whiteheaded, big-nosed chap who stole the record of your father's and mother's marriage from the Mifflin Court House?" he asked Tessie quickly. "Perhaps he was here and stole the jewel."

"He was freckled!" remembered Tessie with a gasp. "The clerk said he was freckled! I remember I thought that was funny, for men don't freckle. It's boys. I danced with a freckled man this very night!" She gasped again. "And he asked a lot of questions about the islands. I never thought about it then. I thought he was just trying to be pleasant. What a fool I was!"

"That's the chap!" declared Mr. Bill.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Who was he? What was his name?" demanded Bert.

"I don't remember," faltered Tessie. "I met so many men to-night. I don't remember any of their names. Oh, dear! What shall I do?" She looked from Bert to Mr. Bill, and when neither of them could tell her what to do she wished with all her heart that Joe Cary was there. Joe would tell her in a minute what to do.

"Well, Tessie, the party's over. It's time to go home." And Granny, who had been talking to the president of the Junior League, came toward them followed by Ka-kee-ta. Tessie shrank away as she saw the gleam of Ka-kee-ta's ax. "Had a good time, dearie?" Granny asked affectionately. Granny had had a wonderful time herself. She was sure that no Gilfooly had ever had a better time.

"Oh, Granny!" Tessie threw her arms around Granny's neck, and hid her face in the soft lace of Granny's gown.

Granny was startled and a bit frightened. "What is it? What is it?" She looked at Mr. Bill and at Bert. "What has happened to my lamb?"

"It's—it's the Tear of God!" sobbed Tessie. "I've—I've lost i-it!"

"Lost it! Stand up, Tessie Gilfooly, and remember queens don't cry before folks. Lost! Nothing of the sort! Ka-kee-ta!" And when

The Amazing Inheritance

Ka-kee-ta had stepped forward with a salute of his ax, she said imperiously, "The Tear of God!"

Ka-kee-ta held out his left hand and opened it, and there on his yellow brown palm was the Tear of God.

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed Mr. Bill.

"My word!" muttered Bert Douglas.

"Oh!" squealed Tessie, absolutely forgetting Granny's hint that queens must keep their emotions to themselves. "Where did Ka-kee-ta get it?" Her face was as pink now as it had been white a moment before.

"I took it off your neck, my dear, when you were dancing," explained Granny proudly. "The folks here were all strangers to me," she told the astonished officers of the Junior League, "and though I knew of course they would be all right or they wouldn't be here, I thought it was just as well not to take any chances. So when Tessie was dancing I slipped the Tear of God from her neck and gave it to Ka-kee-ta to hold. With his ax in his other hand, I knew he could take care of it. It wasn't lost at all, you see, dearie," she smiled at Tessie. "I took it after you came back to the ballroom with Mr. Douglas."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tessie, feeling rather flat and small because she had made such a fuss over a robbery that was not a robbery at all.

XII

MR. KINGLEY decided to give a banquet to the employees of the Evergreen in honor of their former associate, who had been made Queen of the Sunshine Islands by Fate—and her Uncle Pete. Mrs. Kingley looked unutterable words when she heard his plan.

"Bill can run down and ask Miss Gilfooly if it will be all right for Thursday evening," went on Mr. Kingley, much pleased with his idea.

"Bill!" Mrs. Kingley's voice was full of disgust and indignation, about fifty per cent, of each, perhaps. "Do you want Bill to marry Miss Gilfooly?" she asked caustically.

"Marry!" It was Mr. Kingley's turn to stare, and he did it with bulging, questioning eyes. "I don't know as that would be such a bad thing," he muttered after a moment's intensive thought. "I believe it would be a mighty good plan!" he decided emphatically, when he had given it a second moment's thought.

"William Kingley! Your only son—our only son!" Mrs. Kingley angrily claimed a share of Mr. Bill. "And a clerk!" It was quite clear that Mrs. Kingley believed that her only son and the clerks dwelt on vastly different planes, and

The Amazing Inheritance

equally clear that she did not want them on the same plane.

"The Queen of the Sunshine Islands," corrected Mr. Kingley. "A queen is not the same as a clerk, my dear. I believe that such a marriage would be a good thing for the Evergreen. You have no idea," he went on hurriedly as she gave a little snap of scorn, "how the story of Queen Teresa has helped sales. We were feeling the pinch of the business depression, which has been so general, when we found this little queen in our basement. I made the most of the incident, and the papers carried the story all over the country. We have had requests for samples from Chicago and New York and even Denver, Colorado, already. If Bill should marry Miss Gilfooly," he went on thoughtfully, "I actually believe we would have to increase our mail order department. I am sure that it would be an excellent thing for the store."

Mrs. Kingley was so angry at the thought of her only son marrying Miss Gilfooly that she could scarcely speak. Her anger painted her face an unbecoming scarlet, and her eyes flashed furiously. "You think of nothing but the store!" she managed to stammer at last. The words were not at all what she had meant to say. She had meant to wither him with her scorn—and she could only stammer.

Mr. Kingley regarded her with surprise. Of

The Amazing Inheritance

course he thought of the store. "It feeds, clothes and shelters you," he reminded her. "And mighty good food, clothes and shelter," he decided as he looked around the spacious room, so attractively furnished, and at her smart dinner gown, and remembered the excellent dinner he had just eaten. "Mighty good food, clothes and shelter!" he repeated firmly.

"William Kingley!" She towered above him. "You—you—" She stopped and glared at him for a full second. "There is such a thing as a telephone," she finally controlled herself to say majestically. "You could talk to your ex-clerk yourself, instead of sending your only son into danger!" And she sailed from the room to find Ethel and ask her if she ever knew any one as unreasonable and one-idead as her father.

"What's Dad done now?" asked Ethel, who knew of several things her father might have done. "Oh that!" she exclaimed carelessly, when she was told that her father thought it would be a good thing for the Evergreen should her brother and Queen Teresa marry. "I expect he is right. It would be a good thing for the store."

"Ethel! Ethel Kingley!" sputtered Mrs. Kingley. Her voice had seventy-five per cent of disgust in it now. "How can you! Bill and a clerk! an ex-clerk!"

"She seems a nice little thing," went on Ethel, as if she were looking at Tessie and actually saw

The Amazing Inheritance

that she was a nice little thing. "I dare say she would make Bill a good wife, and really, Mother, Bill should be allowed to choose his own wife. I know I mean to choose my own husband!"

"Oh, you!" But Mrs. Kingley was not interested in Ethel's husband. She was still too disturbed over Mr. Bill's wife.

"I dare say Miss Gilfooly will be quite crazy over Dad's banquet," went on Ethel, before she returned to her book, a story of married life which her mother declared no girl should read, but which every girl was reading.

Miss Gilfooly was pleased when she was told of the banquet. She thought it was quite too sweet of Mr. Kingley. She was a bit awed when she was told also that she would have to sit at Mr. Kingley's right hand during the banquet.

"I wish I could sit beside you," she was bold enough to say to Mr. Bill. "I'm scared to death of your father."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Bill, who could not imagine why any one should be scared of his father. Why, his father was just an old man chockfull of old-fashioned ideas and prejudices. "Dad's probably scared of you. He hasn't met many queens in the course of his straight and upright fifty years. And even if he had, he has never met a queen like you!" he declared with unrestrained admiration.

But still Tessie looked dissatisfied. "In what

The Amazing Inheritance

way," she asked quickly, "am I different from other queens?"

Mr. Bill looked at her. Didn't she know? "Glance at them!" he said scornfully. "Just glance at the old frumps and then look in your own mirror. You won't need any one to tell you the answer. The difference, as you will quickly see, is entirely in your favor!"

"Oh!" murmured Tessie, all dimples and blushes, so that she looked less than ever like Mary of England or Marie of Roumania, or even Victoria of Spain.

In spite of Mr. Bill's declaration that old Mr. Kingley, which was the way Tessie always spoke of her former employer, was afraid of her, Tessie did feel a little timid, and a thrill ran down her spine when Mr. Kingley took her hand to lead her into the big tea-room which had been rearranged and elaborately decorated in honor of the banquet for Queen Teresa. An army of men and women had been at work in the room ever since the last luncheon patron had been hurriedly served.

Tessie had a new frock which she had bought at the Evergreen. It was of cream lace and net with silvery blue ribbons and pink roses. The man who designed it must have thought of a young queen or a young princess when he conceived it. It really was an adorable frock, and Tessie looked adorable in it as she smiled shyly at Mr.

The Amazing Inheritance

Kingley. Her blue eyes sparkled, her cheeks were pink, and her red lips were parted in a tremulous smile. But adorable as she looked, Mr. Kingley shook his head. She did not satisfy him.

"Where's your crown?" he demanded abruptly. "I thought queens wore crowns."

"Not until after their coronation," suggested Mr. Bill, who could find no flaws in Tessie at all. From her head to her heels, she was perfect to his admiring eyes. It was just as well that his mother could not see him as he stood gazing at his father's ex-clerk. Mr. Bill looked very handsome himself in his dinner coat. Tessie was sure he was the handsomest man in the world.

"I don't think they wear crowns at all in the Sunshine Islands," she ventured to say shyly. "I think they wear only this." And she touched the jewel which hung from her neck, the royal jewel of the Sunshine Islands.

Mr. Kingley grunted. The royal jewel was not enough, not when there were to be reporters from all the newspapers at the banquet, and a moving picture man as well. His queen must look like a queen. He turned to the store superintendent.

"Julius, isn't there a crown of some kind down in the jewelry department? I'm sure I saw one the other day. It was high in front and dwindled down to nothing in the back." He showed them

The Amazing Inheritance

with his pudgy hands how the crown he had seen ran from high to low.

"You mean a tiara," suggested Julius with a little superiority in his voice, because he knew a tiara when he saw it and his employer didn't. "Yes, Miss Luckins has a couple of tiaras in stock. They are only imitation—paste—you know." He was apologetic because he did not have a crown of real diamonds to offer Mr. Kingley. "We really have no sale for real crowns in Waloo. But this tiara is a very good imitation. Not one in twenty would know it wasn't real," he boasted.

"It will be better than nothing. Go and get it. We can't go in without a crown." And he delayed the banquet until Mr. Julius could find Miss Luckins, go down to the jewelry department and bring back the most elaborate paste tiara which Miss Luckins herself fastened in Tessie's hair.

"There!" Miss Luckins stepped back to get the effect.

"That's better! A lot better!" grunted Mr. Kingley. "Far more royal, you know. Any one can see now that you are a queen. Tell the orchestra we're coming. Everybody ready?" He looked back at Granny and Mr. Bill, who were to follow him when he led the queen. "Don't let that native with the ax stumble against me," he hissed with a shake of his head at Ka-kee-ta, who stood behind his queen. "Allow me, Your

The Amazing Inheritance

Majesty!" And he smiled proudly as he offered his hand to Tessie.

The doors into the banquet-room were thrown wide open, the store orchestra began to play "Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes." Every one jumped up to look at Queen Teresa as she walked in led by Mr. Kingley. Hands were clapped, and there were many cheers. Several of the department buyers called loudly "*Vive la reine!*" to show that they had been in Paris and knew what was what. The color deepened in Tessie's cheeks, and the tears flew to her eyes. She did hope that she wouldn't cry, but she was woefully afraid she would. It was so sweet of every one to be so kind to her. Never, not if she were crowned a hundred times, would she know as proud a moment as this.

She stood blushing beside Mr. Kingley at the big table on the dais, which ran across the end of the room, and faced them all, trembling with excitement. There they were, her former associates of the Evergreen. The employment manager, who had hired her; Miss Murphy, who had snapped at her when she asked for help in making out a sales-slip; Mr. Walker, who was always nagging at her for something. And there was Joe Cary beside Norah Lee at the table with the advertising staff and—How funny!—He was frowning at her. Every one else was smiling and Joe's frown stood out like a black thundercloud

The Amazing Inheritance

in a clear blue sky. She smiled and waved her hand to him, and he nodded coldly, but he did not wave back. She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. Why did Joe have to have a grouch to-night of all nights? She wouldn't look at him again. He could frown as much as he pleased, but she would only look at the smiling faces. There were plenty of them.

"Well?" She became conscious that Mr. Bill was murmuring in her left ear, and she turned to him. Mr. Bill was not frowning. His face wore a radiant smile. "Well," he repeated, as Ka-kee-ta took his place behind his queen much to the annoyance of the waitresses. "We're all set."

"Oh!" Tessie's heart was thumping so fast it was difficult for her to speak. "How grand to have you beside me!"

If Tessie looked down on her former associates with frank delight, they looked up at her with open or secret envy. Miss Allen of the gowns told her neighbors in a whisper how much the cream lace frock had cost, and Mr. Swenson of the boots and shoes murmured the price of the silver slippers, and Miss Bartle of the hosiery laughed indulgently when she said that the silk stockings the queen wore had cost not less than nine dollars a pair.

"Not a cent less, and cheap at that. Every thread silk!"

No wonder they were pleased with Tessie. She

The Amazing Inheritance

was their queen. They had clothed her. And if there was more envy in their hearts than there was admiration in their eyes, it was not strange. It was only natural for them to wish to be in Tessie's silver slippers with a frizzle-headed native in blue denim to hold a shining ax behind them. It was romance, their share—not Tessie's—that they wanted, and every one has a right to a full portion of romance. A birthright into this big world includes a full portion of romance.

The chef had spent a sleepless night preparing a royal menu. He had ransacked the store encyclopedia for names which would honor Tessie's kingdom, and then had to fall back on the good old French menu. There was *pâtage à la Sunshine*, there was *poisson à la Pacific*, there was *poulet à la reine*, and goodness knows what else. It was all very delicious, although Tessie was so excited to find herself between old Mr. Kingley and young Mr. Kingley, and facing all the Evergreen employees and a moving picture machine, that she could scarcely eat a mouthful. Granny peered at her around Mr. Bill and told her she must eat something, that it would be a shame to waste good food.

"And this is good!" she said, pleased that Mr. Kingley had not skimmed the menu for the banquet in honor of her granddaughter.

At last the ice cream and cake had been eaten, the tables cleared, and every glass filled with

The Amazing Inheritance

sparkling ginger ale. The waitresses and the cooks gathered in a corner with glasses of ginger ale in their hands. Mr. Kingley rose to his feet and made a speech, in which he extolled Tessie and the Evergreen and the Sunshine Islands, and the Evergreen—; and when he was all tangled up in the Evergreen, and Mr. Bill reached behind Tessie and pulled his dinner coat, he asked every one to drink the toast to their former associate: "Our little queen, Her Majesty of the Sunshine Islands!"

The band broke into the stirring strains of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." There were cheers and much hand-clapping as the toast was drunk with hearty good will.

"You'll have to respond," Mr. Kingley, flushed and important, told Tessie. "You'll have to say something!"

"A speech! I couldn't!" Tessie shrank back appalled at the mere thought of making a speech before Mr. Kingley and the department managers. She could not do it.

But the clamor on the floor would not subside, and at last she rose up and stood looking at them. How kind they were! How dear! Involuntarily she stretched out her arms as if she would embrace them all.

"You dear, dear folks!" she cried, and her voice quivered with emotion. "I love you every one!"

The Amazing Inheritance

There was more applause, a perfect fury, and then suddenly the lights went out, and the room was plunged in darkness.

"What—what the devil's this?" spluttered Mr. Kingley. "Where's the electrician? I wouldn't have had this happen for a million dollars! What's the matter?" For there was the sound of a scuffle, a muttered curse behind him. He could not see a thing, but he could feel something brush by him. "Bring a light!" he shouted, pale with fright as he thought of what might happen if Ka-kee-ta should use his ax in the darkness. "Can't some one bring a light?"

It was really only a couple of moments, although it seemed hours, before some one found the buttons and turned on the light. When every one blinked and turned to smile reassuringly at Tessie to let her know that it was all right—just a little vagary of the electricity—there were startled shrieks from several hundred throats, for Tessie had disappeared. The place between old Mr. Kingley and young Mr. Kingley was vacant.

"Why—why—" stammered old Mr. Kingley, who had arranged many banquets, but had never lost his guest of honor before.

"Where's Tessie?" shouted Granny. "Where's my granddaughter, the Queen?"

"Where's Tessie?" demanded Joe Cary, who found himself at the royal table, staring into the purple face of old Mr. Kingley.

The Amazing Inheritance

"I'm here, Granny!" And there she was, behind her big bodyguard clutching the Tear of God which hung about her neck. "Ka-kee-ta snatched me and made me stand behind him. What was the matter, Mr. Kingley? Did some one really try to choke me?" She rubbed her neck with her fingers as if to feel if some one had tried to choke her.

"Matter!" exclaimed Mr. Bill. He caught her hand and held it tight to assure himself that she was there beside him again. "Look at that!" He pointed to Ka-kee-ta's left hand, from which hung a black string tie. It dangled limply from the yellow-brown fingers. Mr. Bill looked suspiciously around the room. "Has any man lost a tie?" he asked sharply.

There was an uncomfortable pause in which every man raised a hand to make sure that his tie at least was around his neck. One of the maids by the door stepped forward.

"I think the man who lost his tie has gone," she said in much confusion. "At least some one pushed by me and ran out of the door."

"Why didn't you hold him?" demanded Mr. Bill.

"I thought he was the electrician," stammered the maid. "I thought he was going to see about the lights, and anyway I couldn't have held him. It isn't fair to blame me!" She burst into tears.

"Dear, dear!" fussed Mr. Kingley, too con-

The Amazing Inheritance

fused by the unexpected number on the banquet program to be considerate of weeping maids. "I hope the watchman holds him. I'm sorry," he turned to Tessie. "I wouldn't have had this happen for a million dollars! I should have said you would be perfectly safe here among so many friends, but a man can learn that he doesn't know everything about his own store. I suppose it was that crown—tiara, I mean. Some one thought it was real, and tried to steal it. It looks real!"

"It wasn't the tiara that they tried to steal," guessed Mr. Bill grimly. "It was the Queen!"

"It was the Tear of God!" contradicted Joe Cary, who had moved up until he stood beside Tessie. "Those Sunshine Island rebels don't want Tessie. They want the royal jewel!"

"Bless me!" murmured Mr. Kingley, turning the back of his dinner coat to Joe; for what could Joe Cary, an artist in the advertising department, know? "I'm glad you weren't stolen!" he told Tessie fervently.

"I'm glad, too," ventured Tessie, tearfully tremulous, and she clung tight to Joe's hand. "It might have spoiled the party," she added politely.

"But if the watchman gets the thief what publicity it will make!" gloated Mr. Kingley, true to form. The Evergreen was getting wonderful publicity every day, thanks to Tessie, and the store was thronged as it never had been before a queen was found in its basement. "So long as

The Amazing Inheritance

you are safe, we have nothing to regret. We can leave the rest to the watchman and the store detectives. They will find the thief. I am sure he was not one of our own men. He must have been some miscreant who forced himself in. We will not think of him again. Have you finished your speech?" he asked courteously.

"Long ago!" exclaimed Tessie, taking her fingers from Joe and giving them to Granny to hold.

"Well!" Granny drew a long, long breath. "I'm glad now we have Ka-kee-ta and his ax, even if they do make me nervous. If you had been kidnaped, Tessie Gilfooly, I should never have forgiven myself!"

"I'd have found her!" declared Joe. "No matter where she was hidden, I'd have found her for you, Granny Gilfooly!"

Tessie, listening eagerly to Mr. Bill's plans for catching the miscreant who had dared to interrupt the banquet, never heard him. But Granny heard him, and she smiled at him kindly.

"I believe you would, Joe, I believe you would. You're a good friend to little Tessie."

"You bet I am!" Joe cried eagerly. "And I'm going to look after her! I'm not going to have her fooled by any one!" And he looked indignantly at Mr. Kingley.

XIII

ALTHOUGH Mr. Kingley posted a notice where every one could see it, to the effect that the man who had lost a black string tie at the banquet could obtain the same by calling at the office and explaining how it came to be in Ka-kee-ta's fist, no one appeared to claim the silk. Indeed, it was not long before Mr. Kingley and a majority of the guests thought that Tessie must have imagined that some one had tried to choke her, in an attempt to steal the Tear of God.

"She was excited!" they said indulgently. "And no wonder! But it is ridiculous to think that any one would try to steal the royal jewel, when the queen was surrounded by friends and with her bodyguard and his ax behind her."

"You can't tell friend from foe in the dark, and when you are with friends you are not looking for enemies," Joe Cary told them bluntly. He was perhaps the only one who believed that Tessie was telling the truth, when she said that when the lights went out a strong arm had caught her and pulled her from the table, and then Ka-kee-ta had snatched her and thrust her behind him.

"He can see in the dark!" she insisted with a shiver. "Just like a cat!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"You dreamed it," young Mr. Bill said with a grin. "When the lights went out you were scared, and screamed, and Ka-kee-ta pulled you behind him. That's the way it was!"

"Was it?" But Tessie was not sure. The clasp of that strong arm had been too real for any dream. She could still feel the pull of the fiber that had held the Tear of God about her neck.

"No, it wasn't!" contradicted Joe. "You are dead right, Tessie. Some one did try to take your jewel from you."

"How do you know? You were at the other end of the room!" Mr. Bill regarded him with scorn, because Joe thought he knew so much when Mr. Bill, who had been sitting right next to Tessie, knew so little.

"I know all right!" There was a confidence in Joe's voice which was convincing. "I knew as soon as the fellow touched you, Tess, and I was coming to you even before you screamed. Ask Norah Lee! I bumped against her when I jumped up. You know when the lights went on I was at your place!"

"That's true!" agreed Granny. "He was just beside me!"

Tessie looked frightened. Her lip quivered. "But why should any one want to kidnap me?" she faltered. "I haven't done anything!" She

The Amazing Inheritance

looked at Mr. Bill, but when he did not tell her, she turned to Joe.

"Yes, you have done something," Joe told her bluntly. "You've become Queen of the Sunshine Islands." Trust Joe to find a reason. Joe always had a reason. That was why Tessie had quarreled with him so often. She usually hated his reason. "You told me yourself that Mr. Marvin said there was a bunch of people, Sons of Sunshine they call themselves, who want a native ruler. They don't want a white queen. I bet this kidnaper was a Sunshine Son who wanted that royal jewel, and if he could get you with it, he would shut you up until you consented to abdicate in favor of a native!" There was a grim, triumphant smile on Joe's lips as he elaborated his reason.

"Such rot!" Mr. Bill was thoroughly disgusted with Joe's reason. It was too melodramatic to happen anywhere but on the moving picture screen.

"Oh, Joe!" Tessie whimpered and caught his arm. "Would any one do that?"

"A Son of Sunshine would!" declared Joe. "I say, Tessie, why do you want to be the queen of those cannibal islands?" He sneered at the islands.

"Why—why I have to be," stammered Tessie, confused by the direct question. "Uncle Pete left me the islands and made me the queen. I

The Amazing Inheritance

can't help it, can I?" She appealed to Mr. Bill.

"Of course you can't!" He glared at Joe. How dared Joe insinuate that Tessie could help it. "You can't throw away a kingdom. No one would!"

"Pooh!" sniffed Joe. "Half a dozen islands overrun with naked cannibals!" It sounded as if Joe had a very small opinion of Tessie's kingdom. "The first thing you know, they'll eat you," he prophesied gloomily before he laughed. It was so ridiculous to think of any one, even a hungry cannibal, eating little Tessie.

Tessie screamed. Mr. Bill promptly put his arm around her. He turned fiercely to Joe.

"Look here, Cary!" he began furiously. "Mind your words when you talk to the queen!"

"Queen!" Joe Cary actually laughed. "Queen!" he repeated.

Tessie pulled herself from Mr. Bill's protecting arm. How splendid Mr. Bill was and how—"Joe Cary!" she gasped, pink with indignation.

"Cary!" exclaimed Mr. Bill, even more indignant than Tessie.

Joe's face sobered as he looked from Tessie to Mr. Bill.

"Pooh!" he said again. "What do kings and queens amount to now? They're being knocked off their thrones pretty fast. Look at Russia and Germany! And at the best, they were never anything but a fairy tale. Keep your eyes on the

The Amazing Inheritance

other countries, on England and Italy and Spain, and some day you'll see things happen there. People are learning that they can pay too much for a figurehead and a pageant. An honest workingman is worth all the kings in the world. You know that, Tess! At least you used to know it. I told you. And just because your Uncle Pete was washed up on the Sunshine Islands, and was able to stop the Sunshine king's toothache the king adopted him and left him the islands. As if any one had the right to will human beings to any man! The natives were fools to accept him. You know they were! And as for your Uncle Pete, you'll be wise if you don't inquire about his life on the islands. Filthy brute!" Joe quite forgot himself as he talked about kings and queens.

"Why, Joe Cary!" Tessie could scarcely speak. But she could look, and her eyes flashed fire at the man who dared to stand before her and call her royal uncle names. What would Granny say? She was glad that Granny hadn't heard him.

"Look here, Cary, you can't slander the dead!" exclaimed Mr. Bill indignantly. "And keep your mouth shut about things you don't know," he advised curtly.

"Know!" Joe repeated the word scornfully. "I bet I know more about the Sunshine Islands than the Queen there!" He nodded at big-eyed Tessie. "I've made it my business to know.

The Amazing Inheritance

Every one else has been so wrapped up in the fact that Tess was a Queen that they haven't cared if her kingdom was only half a dozen little islands inhabited by cannibals."

"They're not cannibals now!" declared Tessie.

"They were! Your Uncle Pete was almost eaten by them!"

"They've been civilized and Christianized!" insisted Tessie. "Uncle Bill built a church. It has a corrugated tin roof, and when the sun shines on it the natives think it's silver. The Home of the Silver God, they call it. Ka-kee-ta told me!" She flashed an indignant glance at the scoffer.

"That shows how civilized and Christianized they are," laughed Joe. He was determined to express his thoughts for at least once. "Your Uncle Pete built a motion picture theater, too, Tess, and it saved him from a revolution. But once a cannibal always a cannibal. It's in their blood, and it will take more than one generation to get it out. I wish you'd give up the job. You don't want those islands. You can't live on them! Give them up!"

"Give them up!" Tessie could not believe her own pink ears.

"Give them up!" Mr. Bill echoed the words incredulously.

"You bet! You won't dare live there. The Sons of Sunshine won't let you, and they're right. You don't belong there. Show your sense of truth

The Amazing Inheritance

and right and give them up. Let the natives elect their own ruler. It's the only fair way," begged Joe.

"I suppose you'd like me to go back to selling aluminum in the Evergreen!" Tessie proved that she could be as scornful as she could be sweet and shy. But her scorn did not make any impression on Joe.

"I would!" he declared. "I'd love to see you back there in your little black dress earning your own way. And I'd love to have you to walk home with again. And I'd love to go in to a dinner of Granny's boiled beef and raisin pie again. I'd like to go back to where we were when you heard you were a queen! Can't you see, Tess," he pleaded, "that there isn't anything in this queen business any more? Come on and give it up!"

"You're a socialist!" stammered Mr. Bill, so amazed at such plain speaking that he could do nothing but stammer. "You're a rank anarchist!"

Joe tore his eyes from indignant Tessie to stammering Mr. Bill. "If you think that a hatred of queens—white girl queens—for cannibal islands is socialism then I am a socialist," he said boldly. "What do you know about Tessie?" he demanded abruptly. "You never saw her until this musical-comedy-queen business began."

This was so true that Mr. Bill and Tessie both blushed.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Well, I see her now," Mr. Bill managed to say. "And I'll help her be a Queen. The idea of asking any one to give up a kingdom! I never heard of such an absurd thing in my life!" It was so absurd that he laughed.

"If she doesn't give it up I'll bet it will be taken from her," prophesied Joe. "The Sons of Sunshine are after her. And they are after the Tear of God, too. You saw that gink on the porch the night Tess heard she was a queen. I'll bet he was a Son of Sunshine! And if you ever find anything about that man last night you'll find he was a Sunshine Son too, or I'm a goat! The third time he may get to you, and then you'll remember what I said," he told Tessie gloomily.

But Tessie had pulled herself together, and now she laughed at his gloomy prophecies. She did not believe them. How could she when Mr. Bill, who knew so much more of the world than Joe Cary, told her that what Joe said was ridiculous. Just what you might expect from a rank anarchist. But she stopped laughing when Joe looked straight into her blue eyes and said very soberly, far more soberly than he had spoken before: "But even if you are a fool, Tess, I'll stand by you. I'll help you! You can always count on me!"

"Well, upon my word!" gasped Tessie, her eyes following him as he walked away. "The idea of Joe Cary talking to me like that!"

"Yes, the very idea," agreed Mr. Bill. "But

The Amazing Inheritance

don't think of it another minute! The fellow's cracked. I'll bet Dad doesn't know what a socialist he is!"

"You wouldn't tell," begged Tessie in a panic, for if Joe lost his position in the Evergreen what would he do? He hadn't inherited an island kingdom and even if he had— She shook her head. She couldn't understand Joe.

"No, of course I shan't tell!" Mr. Bill spoke loftily, as if Tessie should have known that he did not tell tales. "Give those fellows rope enough and they hang themselves. He's so green with envy that he isn't a king that he can't do anything but rant."

"I don't think it was that!" frowned honest little Tessie. "I don't think Joe would ever want to be king of any island!"

"Try him!" advised Mr. Bill scornfully. "Just try him. I never knew a socialist to keep on spouting socialistic rot after he had money to buy him decent food and clothes and a bath. But don't let's talk about him! I'm glad you're a queen. It's the most romantic thing I ever heard, and I'm strong for romance. I used to think there wasn't any left in the world." He smiled at Tessie, who looked the very flower of romance. "I'm darned glad you're a queen!" he said fervently.

"I'm glad, too," murmured Tessie, quite ready to forget Joe Cary. "I don't care what Joe Cary

The Amazing Inheritance

said! And I am going to try and be a good queen and do my duty by my people! Be simple and honest, is what Madame Cabot said."

"Of course you are! But what is there in this Sons of Sunshine business?" curiously. "Anything?"

"I'm afraid there is!" A little frown broke the pretty curve of Tessie's eyebrows. "It's true. Joe is right that some of the people want a native ruler. They rebelled against Uncle Pete, but he kept them down. Now that he is gone they don't want a white queen. They aren't the best people, Ka-kee-ta said," she explained apologetically. "They're the—the lower classes. And they haven't seen me! They don't know how I plan to help them!"

"They'll adore you the minute they do see you!" declared Mr. Bill unsteadily.

"Oh, I hope they will!" faltered blushing Tessie.

"Of course they will! Didn't I?" Mr. Bill caught her hand and squeezed it hard.

XIV

JOE CARY'S rude and reckless words had an effect, although perhaps not the one he had hoped. But they did make Tessie think of something besides Mr. Bill, her new frocks and her new pleasures. The interruption of the Evergreen banquet did not bother her long, for that was a problem for the store detective to solve. But Joe Cary made her realize that the Sunshine Islands were more than a throne and a bank for their queen. It was odd that, when Tessie returned to the Waloo, she should find Granny reading one of the big books in which there was an entire chapter devoted to "The Pearl of the Pacific—The Sunshine Islands." Granny looked up from a picture of sea and palms when Tessie came in.

"Tessie," she began at once, "are you sure you're going to like being a queen for a lot of naked cannibals?"

"Why, Granny!" Tessie stood still and stared at her. What did Granny mean? Of course Joe Cary had been talking to her, and for a moment Tessie hated him. She didn't care if he had been her only friend when she was a salesgirl at the Evergreen. She quite forgot that he had taken her to a moving-picture show once in two weeks.

The Amazing Inheritance

"What's the matter now?" she asked impatiently. "Have people been complaining about Ka-kee-ta again?" For there were people who had complained of Ka-kee-ta, and it must be confessed that it was disconcerting to a timid woman, or even a brave man, to walk down a dimly lighted corridor and find oneself face to face with a bare-footed colored man, in loosely fitting blue clothes; a man with a tattooed nose and frizzled hair stiffened with cocoanut oil, and carrying a shining ax. Tessie herself would have shrieked if she had come upon such a man in a dimly lighted corridor. As it was, she often felt like screaming when she saw him, and just now, after her talk with Joe, she was impatient. "What is it now, Granny?" she wanted to know. A lot of her nervous impatience was in her voice as she stood in front of Granny, and there was more nervous impatience in her frowning little face.

Granny looked up and sighed as she saw the slim little creature in a very modish frock and a very modish hat. Tessie was very, very different from the shabby little girl in the cheap black cotton dress, but that was no reason why Granny should sigh mournfully as she looked at her. Surely Granny did not want Tessie to be the shabby little girl of those old days!

"I was just wondering," Granny said meekly, "as I read this book if you had learned to eat raw fish yet?"

The Amazing Inheritance

An angry flush stained Tessie's face, and she stamped her high-heeled shoe.

"No, I don't like raw fish!" she cried stormily. "And I don't ever expect to like raw fish! Why should I? Can't I have somebody cook fish for me?" she demanded haughtily.

"In the Sunshine Islands it's the custom to eat it raw," Granny said very gently, for she could recognize the beginning of a tantrum as well as any one. "And there isn't anything that's harder to change than a custom. When I read about the food and some other things in this book, and looked at a few of these pictures, I got to wondering how we are going to like those islands and the customs the people have there. You know, Tessie," she went on, when Tessie said never a word, but just stood sulkily tapping the rug with the pointed toe of her shoe, "when you came home from the Evergreen that day and told me about your Uncle Pete and how he had died and made you a queen, I couldn't think of anything but how wonderful it was. My boy a king! And my girl a queen! And I pictured those Sunshine Islands like England and Italy, and perhaps a little like the United States, even if the United States ain't got crowned kings and queens. It was so wonderful that I was all puffed up like bread sponge. But since we came to the Waloo, and I got so much time, no washing or cooking to do, I've looked into some of these books and talked to

The Amazing Inheritance

Ka-kee-ta as much as a body can talk to a critter that don't know more than the rudiments of real language, and I can't find that these islands are like any place I ever heard of. I don't know as we're going to like them. The folks don't all wear clothes," she confided to Tessie in a dubious whisper.

"I can teach them to wear clothes," Tessie said coldly. "I've talked to Mr. Kingley, and he's going to send me some clothes from the Evergreen. We're going to begin with bathing suits."

"Mr. Kingley's a real business man, ain't he? Always thinking of the Evergreen!" Granny had to admire Mr. Kingley's ability to think of his business at all times. She went on a bit sarcastically. "And is young Mr. Bill going to take charge and open a branch in the islands? It won't pay in your lifetime, Tessie. You mustn't count on it! It'll take more than Mr. Kingley's say-so to put even bathing suits on folks that don't wear anything but a bit of fringe around their waists. And it ain't only clothes," she added mournfully. "It's white ants and centipedes and snakes and sharks and——"

"For goodness sakes, Granny!" Tessie jumped when Granny spoke of sharks, and she was almost at the end of her patience when there was a loud thump on the door. "I do wish," exclaimed Tessie, glad of a legitimate reason to let Granny see that she had reached the end of her patience,

The Amazing Inheritance

"that Ka-kee-ta would learn to knock. I hate to hear him hit the door with his old ax!"

"That's just what I've been telling you," began Granny. "You ain't going to like the Sunshine Islands' way of doing things."

But Tessie did not listen to her. She walked to the door and threw it wide open. "Ka-kee-ta," she began sternly, but instead of facing Ka-kee-ta she looked at a fat man with a light, oh very light, hair, and a big nose. "Oh," Tessie murmured feebly. "Oh!"

"Queen Teresa?" asked the stranger eagerly, although he knew very well that she was Queen Teresa. "Of the Sunshine Islands?" He came into the room and shut the door carefully behind him.

A great hope dashed into Tessie's mind. He was the special representative from the Sunshine Islands, the man who was to escort her to her kingdom in obedience to the orders in her Uncle Pete's last will and testament. Of course he was the special representative. In spite of the fact that he made Tessie think that he must be made of tubs, large and small, neatly piled upon one another. He had an air of great assurance and greater authority. He could tell her all about the islands and that it would not be necessary for her to eat native food nor to have Ka-kee-ta bang on the door with his ax. He would tell her everything. He looked as full of information as a com-

The Amazing Inheritance

plete set of encyclopedia. And when he spoke, she was sure he was the special representative, for he said smilingly, ingratiatingly, "I have come to talk to you about the Sunshine Islands."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the Queen of the Sunshine Islands. She looked triumphantly at Granny. "Won't you sit down?" She hesitated in choosing a chair for herself and at last took one which stood near Granny. After she was seated in it she moved it even closer to Granny as if she wanted her comfort or protection.

"You must think it is very romantic to be a queen," went on the tublike man, still smiling pleasantly. "And it is romantic! I suppose you picture your kingdom as another England or Spain or——"

"I don't," interrupted Granny. "Not any more. I might as well confess that at first I did that very thing, but I've just read a few things in these books about the Sunshine Islands, and I know now that they ain't a bit like England or even Spain. I was just telling Tessie—the queen—that when Ka-kee-ta knocked on the door with his ax."

"You are quite right!" He smiled at Granny and nodded his white thatched head. "But I can tell you much more than you will find in any book. To begin with, the pleasant parts of the islands are beautiful, very beautiful. They are not large; you could crowd the half a dozen into the state of Minnesota and have room to spare.

The Amazing Inheritance

But the climate! Ah, the climate! It is perfect! The islands are south of Hawaii, you know, but nearer the United States—nearer Mexico would be more correct—but it is the same thing. They are coral islands with cocoanut palms and banana and breadfruit trees. The villages are made up of palm leaf huts with a larger hut on the largest island for the ruler."

"Isn't there any electric light or any gas or any city water?" asked Granny, who could not believe that there was any place without those three necessities.

"There is not. But there is a sky bluer than any sky you ever saw, and the water in the lagoon is as clear as crystal and of a wonderful blue-green color. The coral sand is so white that it makes your eyes ache. The Sunshine Islands are rarely beautiful, but they are not convenient. It would be safe to say that they have not a single convenience," he insisted as Granny gasped and exclaimed:

"Not even in the king's palace?"

"Palace!" He laughed scornfully almost, as Joe Cary had laughed at kings and palaces. "Palm-leaf huts," he explained. "And the people—you know they are cannibals?" He looked at Tessie, as if he were vastly amused to know that her people were cannibals.

"Not cannibals now," faltered Tessie, almost in tears to hear how unlike her dreams her kingdom

The Amazing Inheritance

was. "Uncle Pete civilized them and showed them how wrong it was to eat each other."

"Not all," corrected the tub-ular blond. "The last election showed that one out of every two inhabitants was a conservative—a cannibal."

"Elections!" Tessie did not know that elections were held in the Sunshine Islands, and she wondered vaguely if she were a democrat or a republican. She knew she was not a conservative, if conservatives were cannibals.

"The islands are really no place for a white woman, for a young and beautiful white woman," the man said bluntly. He gazed at Tessie with such open admiration that she moved impatiently and wished that he would stop looking at her and look at Granny. "You can't live there, Miss Gilfooly—is that the name? I know. It's out of the question. I've spent months on Ta-ri-ha, that's the largest island, and I know what I'm talking about when I say it is no place for a white woman. A white man might keep the natives in hand if he were——"

"Big and strong and brutal," suggested Granny thoughtfully.

He turned to her. "I see you knew King Pete, madam?"

"I was his mother." Granny sighed as if she could remember times when she had found her son big and strong and brutal. "But if you don't think my granddaughter should live on her islands

The Amazing Inheritance

what do you think she should do with them?" Granny believed in the straight line. She had absolutely no use for that beautiful curved line we are taught to admire. Straight lines are so much more direct. She looked at the stranger, but she could not find any straight lines about him; he was all curves.

"Granny!" exclaimed Tessie indignantly. The idea of Granny speaking as if there was even a possibility that she would not go to the Sunshine Islands. In imagination Tessie saw herself on a great white ship which was drawing near a shore that bore a marked resemblance to the pictures she had seen of New York harbor. And she saw great throngs of natives clothed in queer shapeless garments—but fully clothed—and she heard their joyous shouts of welcome. She liked the picture her imagination showed her far better than she liked the one drawn by this white-headed stranger. In the back of her mind there was a faint memory of something unpleasant in connection with a fat, white-headed man with a big nose and freckles, but she could not think what it was while this man regarded her with such bright blue eyes. She wished she could, it might be easier to talk to him if she could remember.

"Who are you?" she asked suddenly, oddly uncomfortable under his steady, unblinking stare.

"My name is Pracht," he said frankly. "Fred-

The Amazing Inheritance

eric Pracht. I have lived in the Sunshine Islands for months. I knew King Pete very well."

"Pracht," meditated Granny. "That sounds like a German name."

He stopped smiling at Tessie to smile at Granny, and Tessie drew a deep breath of relief, as if at last she had more space about her.

"It is not strange that my name sounds German, because it is German," Mr. Pracht explained to Granny. "My great-grandfather came from Frankfort and settled in Pennsylvania. There are many German names in Pennsylvania."

"H-m," muttered Granny, and she regarded him gravely, as if she were not quite satisfied with the explanation, as if she suspected that it would not wear well—that it would shrink or fade. "My son Pete," she said slowly, "he inherited the islands, didn't he?"

"From the old king. He cured the old king's toothache."

"Didn't the old king have any children?" Even if she suspected that his information might not wear well, Granny thought it was just as well to obtain as much of it as she could.

"He had twenty-three."

"Twenty-three children!" Granny gasped. She had known large families in her day, but twenty-three children——

"Seventeen girls and six boys," was the ready

The Amazing Inheritance

response. "And thirty-one grandchildren. I don't exactly know how many great-grandchildren there are."

"Never mind." The old king's children interested Granny far more than his great grandchildren. "When there were twenty-three children, why did the old king leave his kingdom to my son Pete?" That was the question which did interest her, and while a toothache cure should be paid for, a kingdom did seem rather a large price.

Mr. Pracht shrugged his shoulders. "That is what the twenty-three children would like to know. They declare that King Pete hypnotized their father, or, as they put it, placed him under a spell. My private opinion is that the old king quarreled with his family until he hated every one of his twenty-three children. And they hated him. They hated each other, too, until their father died and they came together to fight his successor. That's why the Sons of Sunshine organized. You've heard of them?" He turned his bright blue eyes on Tessie again.

She nodded, but did not speak. Granny did not speak either for a moment; then she said slowly, as if she were trying to visualize her words:

"That's quite a family. Twenty-three children!"

"The old man had three wives," Mr. Pracht said with a little laugh.

"Three! Do you mean that a man can have

The Amazing Inheritance

more than one wife in my granddaughter's kingdom?" If Granny's gray hair had not been held by a net, it would have risen with horror at such a thought.

"A man can have as many wives as he can buy," explained Mr. Pracht. "You remember I told you the islands were not like Minnesota and Waloo." He laughed and showed two rows of big white teeth.

"They don't seem to be," murmured Granny, while Tessie gasped. "I must confess I am surprised. Ain't you surprised, Tessie, to hear all this? I had my suspicions after I got over my first surprise and had time to remember Pete, and to look into these books. But I thought you were going to tell us what you thought Tessie should do with these islands which her Uncle Pete left her when he died?" she said suddenly.

"There is but one thing to do," Mr. Pracht told her so suddenly and emphatically that she knew that he had given the question some study. He was not offering her any made-while-you-wait opinion. She should sell her rights in them, and sell as soon as she can. Real estate values vary, you know, and just at present Miss Gilfooly could obtain a very good price. If she waits I am afraid she will lose money. If she sells her rights at once, I am quite sure that she will obtain enough to enable her to live like a queen wherever she

The Amazing Inheritance

pleases." He smiled pleasantly at Tessie, but Tessie frowned.

"I wouldn't be a queen if I sold my islands," she objected. Already her head felt bare, as if a crown had been torn from it.

"Surely you would be a queen. A queen doesn't lose her title when she loses her kingdom," declared Mr. Pracht, quick to see that honors meant more to Tessie just then than lands. "Look at Kaiser Bill. And the French empress who died the other day. So long as you live, you will be Queen Teresa of the Sunshine Islands. But take my word for it that you will find it much pleasanter to be Queen Teresa in London or Paris, or even in Waloo, than you would in the Sunshine Islands. I can't think of a thing you would like there—not one thing."

"Uncle Pete liked them!" flared Tessie, indignant at such contemptuous scorn of her kingdom. "He liked them well enough to live there years and years."

"He probably had his reasons." There was a significance in Mr. Pracht's smooth voice that made Granny and Tessie look at each other. "And he was a man," went on Mr. Pracht. "He never hesitated when it was necessary to put down rebellion."

"I bet he didn't!" agreed Granny.

"And you know there is a strong desire for a native ruler? The Sons of Sunshine are behind

The Amazing Inheritance

it. They will never permit you to land without a fight. And you wouldn't be able to hold your throne," he grinned, "without bloodshed, I know!" And he told Tessie more about her kingdom—disagreeable things. By the time he finished Tessie was almost in tears.

"I am prepared to offer you two hundred and fifty thousand dollars for your rights in the Sunshine Islands," he said at last.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!" Tessie was on her feet and staring at him indignantly.

"The lawyer said they were worth a million pounds!" Granny said sharply. Granny had learned to bargain in the old days, and some lessons are never forgotten.

"A million pounds!" Mr. Pracht repeated. "That sounds like King Pete. He was not the man to put a low valuation on anything that belonged to him. But a million pounds! That is ridiculous! Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is far more than they are worth, but I want Miss Gilfooly to be comfortable and have some luxuries. I want her to have an income that will let her live anywhere!" His face wore the kindest, the most benevolent of expressions as he turned it to Tessie.

Tessie did not like his benevolent expression any more than she had liked his admiring smile. The something in the back of her head which

The Amazing Inheritance

connected a fat, white-headed, big-nosed, freckled man with an unpleasant experience bothered her. She wished she could remember what it was.

"Are you the special representative my Uncle Pete said was to come for me?" she asked suddenly.

"Special representative!" he repeated, and there was a vague uncertainty in his voice which told Tessie at once that he knew even less of the special representative than she did.

Granny was still considering the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. She sniffed at them.

"I never trust a man who pays more than a thing is worth," she contemptuously told Mr. Pracht. "There's always a nigger in the woodpile. Are you buying these islands for yourself?" she asked pleasantly, "or for the twenty-three children? Tessie would want to know who would look after the people if she should sell the islands."

"I sure would!" Tessie looked gratefully at Granny. Trust Granny to ask leading questions.

Mr. Pracht hesitated before he spoke in a most confidential manner, as if only to Granny and Tessie would he admit the truth. "I represent a syndicate which plans to develop the natural resources of the islands. The syndicate has no use for the title, so that Miss Gilfooly can remain a queen in name. And I can assure her that the people will be well looked after. I might pos-

The Amazing Inheritance

sibly," he frowned and spoke more slowly, "be able to offer two hundred and seventy-five thousand!" He looked at Tessie as if he had made a wonderful offer, one that she could not afford to refuse. Surely when she heard that sum she would jump up and exclaim: "Yes, thank you. You may have my kingdom for two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars!"

"Couldn't you make it three hundred thousand?" asked Granny, quite as if she were selling rags to the junk man and not bargaining with a syndicate for a kingdom.

He looked at her. "I should hate to say positively, but if that is the price Miss Gilfooly will accept, I might—yes!" He took a sudden determination. "I will assume the responsibility and offer you three hundred thousand dollars. It's a big price! The syndicate will lose money, but——"

"Bosh!" exclaimed Granny, and she rose to her feet and stood beside Tessie. "Bosh! Syndicates don't lose money! I don't know how Queen Teresa feels, but if I were in her shoes, I'd tell your syndicate to go to Jericho before I would sell an inch of my islands. That's what I'd do!" And she snapped her fingers in his face.

"Madam!" He jumped back indignantly. He turned to Tessie. After all the Sunshine Islands belonged to Tessie, not to her belligerent grandmother.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Of course I shan't sell my islands!" declared Tessie, flushed and indignant, that he should really think she would. "I wouldn't sell them for a million! I have a duty to the people! It wouldn't be right to sell them!"

An ugly look crept into Mr. Pracht's blue eyes. "You can refuse if you wish," he said, and there was an ugly note in his voice, far different from his former suave, smooth manner. "I can only remind you again that the natives have sworn that they will never have another white ruler. And you will find that they will stop at nothing. They have several disagreeable customs in regard to those they consider usurpers. Boiling them in shark oil is perhaps the simplest!" He bowed triumphantly and walked toward the door.

"Is that so," remarked Granny coldly. "And may I ask you if you were at the Evergreen banquet for the queen the other evening?"

"Banquet?" he swung around and looked at her. There was an odd expression in his eyes.

"Yes, there was an unexpected guest who made things very disagreeable for a minute. You sound as if you might have been him."

He shook his head. "I have no time for social gatherings," he said coldly. "But Miss Gilfooly had better consider my offer. As I said, the natives will stop at nothing."

If he expected Tessie to call him back and whimper that she was afraid of the natives, and

The Amazing Inheritance

couldn't he do something to protect her he was sadly disappointed. He found himself on the other side of the door without a word being spoken. As the door closed behind him Tessie turned to her grandmother.

"Granny," she wailed, "did you hear what he said?" She caught Granny's hand and held it tight.

"Sure, I heard what he said!" Granny put a protecting arm around her. "But I doubt if there is enough shark oil in the United States to boil anybody, my lamb. Don't you fret. Your Granny will take care of you!"

"I'm not fretting!" But she clung to Granny's hand. "And I'm glad he isn't one of my people! I wouldn't trust him! I don't like him!"

"I don't trust him, either. I bet he knows more about what happened at the Evergreen banquet than we do. You'll see. We'll know all about it some day. Did you take a good look at him, Tessie?"

Tessie nodded tearfully. "Fat and white, like a nasty worm," she gulped.

Granny added a feature to Tessie's sketch. "And a big nose! You remember it was a man with white hair and a big nose that stole the record of your ma's and pa's wedding. Don't you forget that, Tessie Gilfooly! That man tried to make us think he was honest, coming here and offering to buy your islands. But he ain't honest,

The Amazing Inheritance

You can tell that as soon as you look at him. There's something queer in this business, Tessie! I don't understand it, but you look out for that man. He's got a bad eye. Dear, dear, I wish Joe Cary was still boarding with us! I trusted Joe Cary!"

Tessie moved away impatiently, and then came back to kiss Granny's cheek. "Don't you fret, Granny," she said in her turn. "What could that Pracht man do to me?"

"He could kidnap you and turn you over to those cannibals!" Granny tremulously told her of one thing that Pracht could do. "And you heard how they treat rulers they don't like? I declare, Tessie, I wish your Uncle Pete had left those islands to an orphan asylum instead of to you! It ain't going to be all pleasure being a queen!"

XV

IN spite of her brave words, Tessie did not feel brave when she thought of Frederic Pracht and his threats. She shivered and turned pale, and there was a frightened look in her big blue eyes. She wondered if Mr. Pracht had told her the truth about the islands and the people and their customs—their barbarous customs.

She suddenly discovered that she knew almost nothing about the kingdom her Uncle Pete had left to her. She had been a queen for almost a month, and she had been so busy spending the island revenues that she had scarcely glanced in her library books. She blushed with shame. Joe Cary, who had no claim to the islands at all, knew far more about them than she did. He talked as if the Sons of Sunshine were like the I. W. W. or anarchists who threw bombs when and where they pleased. Now that she realized how ignorant she was, Tessie could not understand how she had been satisfied to know nothing. She had only been interested in spending the money Mr. Marvin had given her. She had not taken so much as a minute to learn anything about the history of the islands, nor anything about the

The Amazing Inheritance

people who lived on the islands. It wasn't right, she told herself with shame.

"I'm a rotten queen," she confessed to Granny in a disgust so deep that it colored her cheeks and brought a black frown to her smooth white forehead. "But I don't have to keep on being a rotten queen." And she flew to the telephone and called for Marvin, Phelps & Stokes and asked eagerly for Mr. Douglas—Mr. Gilbert Douglas.

"This is Qu—I mean this is Tessie Gilfooly," she corrected herself with a shamed little laugh, for in her present humble state of mind she did not feel that she had any right to call herself a queen.

"Hello! Your Majesty!" chuckled Bert. Tessie could hear him laugh over the wire, and the hearty chuckle cheered her. "What can I do for you to-day?"

"You can tell me if you have heard anything about the special representative from the Sunshine Islands." Tessie quickly told him what he could do for her. "It seems to me he should be here by now."

"That's a funny thing!" exclaimed Bert. "I just put on my hat to come over and tell you what we have heard of that very representative. He—" Bert hesitated and then went on reluctantly—"he is still in the islands."

"Still in the islands!" repeated Tessie faintly.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Why—why—I thought he was to come at once!"

"He was captured by a bunch of rebels. Sons of Sunshine they call themselves," explained Bert slowly. He was finding that it was not nearly so pleasant to carry bad news as it had been to carry good news.

"My goodness gracious!" cried Tessie. "My gracious goodness! They won't hurt him, will they? They won't boil him in sh-shark oil?" Her voice shook as she asked the question, but of course Bert would tell her that it was ridiculous to think that any one would be treated in such a savage fashion in these civilized days.

But Bert hesitated. "Well," he said at last, "when you get down to brass tacks your people aren't much more than savages, Queen Teresa, and they do things in a savage way. I don't honestly think that they would boil any one in oil, but you never can tell what cannibals will do. Anyway the party that is in power—that was your uncle's party, you know, the same as our republicans, as I understand it—is doing everything to straighten matters and show the Sons of Sunshine that it will be to the advantage of the islands if King Pete's will is carried out. I expect the rebels will free the special representative at once and he will be along as soon as he can. You're not to worry. You're not on the islands.

The Amazing Inheritance

You're safe here in Waloo. You haven't anything to worry about."

"Haven't I?" quavered Tessie. "Did you hear what happened the other night at the Evergreen banquet? If it hadn't been for Ka-kee-ta, I would have been kidnaped. The store detective hasn't found out a thing, and Mr. Kingley thinks I imagined it. But I didn't. I didn't!" she insisted. "Even if I don't have to worry, I do. I can't help it! Do you know, Bert Douglas, that I don't know anything about those islands! Not a single solitary thing!"

"I don't know much!" Bert frankly admitted his ignorance, and he did not seem ashamed of it, but then Bert was not a king, he was only a lawyer. "I guess there isn't much to learn. You see, they were almost unknown until your Uncle Pete was washed up on them and put them on the map."

"You must have papers and things?" suggested Tessie, pinkly ashamed that she had not asked the question before.

"I'll gather up everything I can find and come right over," offered Bert eagerly. "Shall I?"

"Do!" begged Tessie. "I just can't wait another minute to learn all about them!"

She was a little disappointed in the big law firm of Marvin, Phelps & Stokes as she hung up the receiver. Surely some one in the office should have known about the property of a

The Amazing Inheritance

client. She didn't believe that the lawyers knew as much as Joe Cary. Joe! She took the receiver from its hook again and asked Central to give her the Evergreen, please. When Central at last reluctantly connected her with the big department store, she breathlessly demanded Joe Cary.

"Hello, Joe!" she said as soon as she heard his friendly voice over the wire. "This is Tessie!"

"Hello, Tess! What do you want me to do?" For experience had taught Joe that when Tessie called him up it was because she wanted him to do something.

"I want you to come right over and tell me everything you know about these Sons of Sunshine!" Her voice quivered as she spoke of the Sons of Sunshine.

"What do you mean?" asked Joe sharply. "What have they been trying to do now?"

"My goodness!" Tessie was frightened. "You don't really think there are any of them in Waloo, do you? I thought you were jollying when you said the man who tried to take me from the Evergreen banquet was a Son of Sunshine. I never believed there were any of them in Waloo!" Her teeth chattered, and cold fingers seemed to be running up and down her spine.

"I don't jolly about serious things. I honestly believe that the man you found on the porch that night was a Sunshiner, and I am just as sure that

The Amazing Inheritance

the man who tried to rob you at the banquet was one, too. I can't prove it, and the store detective laughs at me, but I know I am right. Don't have anything to do with them, Tess. They're brutes! They wouldn't stop at anything!"

"I know!" impatiently. "And I'm scared to death, Joe Cary! I wish you'd come right over and tell me what you know!"

"I'll run up this evening."

"You tell Mr. Kingley I want to see you right away, and he'll let you come right away," guessed Tessie. She would die if she had to wait until evening.

"I shan't ask any favors of old Kingley," Joe told her stiffly.

"Oh, Joe!" Her breath caught in a sob. "Not when I ask you? Please, please? I'm frightened!" Her quivering voice told him how frightened she was.

"All right!" he said quickly. "I'll come over, but for heaven's sake keep your shirt on and don't lose your head!"

"I don't want to lose my head," she agreed meekly. "That's why I want you to come right over. And, Joe, you're a darling!"

"Oh, am I?" gruffly. "We'll see about that!"

The information Bert gathered proved to be most unsatisfactory to Tessie. It only told about Uncle Pete's will and certain properties which he possessed in the Hawaiian Islands. There was

The Amazing Inheritance

scarcely a word about the people or the politics of the Sunshine Islands.

"You don't know as much as I do," complained Tessie, as she pushed the papers aside. She looked at him, and disappointment was written all over her face.

"No, I don't suppose I do! You've had Kakeeta to tell you things. But I say, you're not really worrying, are you? You needn't because we are all going to stand by you. Mr. Marvin said the other day that he rather thought he would send me along when you go to the islands to see that everything is all right."

"Bert Douglas!" She stared at him and a little of the worry slipped from her eyes. "How perfectly wonderful! And perhaps Mr. Kingley will send Mr. Bill! Mr. Bill told me last night. His father wants him to look over the islands. With you and Mr. Bill everything will be perfect!"

"Sure to," agreed Bert, although he did look a trifle disappointed when he heard that Mr. Bill was to be a member of the royal party.

But Joe Cary was not so sure that Bert and Mr. Bill would make everything all right for Tessie. He shook his head.

"You have to remember that you will not be dealing with civilized people, Tessie," he said frowningly. "Oh, yes, some of them are civilized in a way, but from what I hear your Uncle Pete

The Amazing Inheritance

was as big a savage as any of them. He did build a church and import a missionary, but when the missionary disappeared he didn't send for another."

"What became of the missionary?" Tessie was afraid of the answer. Her red lips lost their color as she asked for it.

"Just as well not to ask too many questions," suggested Joe. "No one ever heard. He just disappeared. The Sons of Sunshine were organized to fight your Uncle Pete's revolutionary ideas, you know. Old customs was the war-cry. And they swear they will never have another white ruler. There is something back of it all that I can't get hold of yet and it means trouble. Your Uncle Pete should have known better than to have left you such a mess. His money was all right, but he didn't need to leave you his troubles. The natives will never accept you as their queen!"

"Ka-kee-ta did," Tessie tearfully reminded him.

"Ka-kee-ta was your Uncle Pete's tool and slave. He thought your Uncle Pete was a god, but I expect at heart Ka-kee-ta's still a savage. Don't you trust him. Hang it all! I wish you'd refuse to have anything to do with the darned old islands! I'm afraid for you!" And when Joe Cary was afraid, there was real cause for fear.

The Amazing Inheritance

"I'm afraid too!" gulped Tessie, and impulsively she told him about Frederic Pracht and his offer and his threat.

"There it is!" exclaimed Joe. "They've begun, you see, and nobody knows where they will stop. They won't come out in the open. They fight in the dark. Tessie, you're so little and helpless and sweet!" His hand shot out to close on her fingers. "You can't fight them!"

But the touch of his fingers gave Tessie courage to stop whimpering and sit up straight. "I can!" she insisted, her head high. "I'm Irish, you know, Irish enough not to give in until I know I'm beaten. And I trust Uncle Pete. He wouldn't have left me the islands if he hadn't thought I could manage them. And I'll have Granny and Johnny! And Bert Douglas is going with us! And so is Mr. Bill! We ought to be able to handle a lot of ignorant natives!"

"Bill Kingley! Bert Douglas! What do they know about the Sunshine Islands? I suppose I'll have to go, too, Tessie! I can't let you take your old Granny without me! She's been too good to me," he explained. "Are you going to take Norah Lee, too?" He seemed to want to know just who would compose the party. He looked at her eagerly when he spoke of Norah.

"Of course. I'll have to have some one to answer my letters. It will be splendid to have you, Joe! I shan't worry another minute. You are

The Amazing Inheritance

such a comfort! Before you came I was scared to death, but now—" She caught his hands and squeezed them. "It's such fun to be a queen, Joe," she whispered, all her fears forgotten as she thought of the pleasant party she was going to take to the Sunshine Islands.

"Is it, little girl?" tenderly.

"Is it! You know I never had anything in all my life until Uncle Pete died, and then in a flash I stopped being nobody and was somebody. I should say I was somebody! Old Mr. Kingley never knew I was on earth until I became a queen, and now he has given me a banquet and unlimited credit, and Mrs. Kingley invited me to dinner, and Ethel Kingley has asked me to join her bridge club, and Mr. Bill—Mr. Bill is here all the time!" She flushed as she spoke of Mr. Bill.

"You like Bill Kingley, don't you, Tessie?" he asked gently.

The color in Tessie's cheeks deepened. "Of course I like him," she said frankly. "I adored him before I ever knew him and now—" She raised her head and looked at Joe. "He's so kind and interested," she explained softly. "He thinks it's awfully jolly for me to be a queen."

"He would!" Joe was rather scornful of Mr. Bill's thought. "He hasn't sense enough to see that thrones are nothing but targets now. It may have been all right in the old days to have kings and queens, Tessie, I'm not questioning the

The Amazing Inheritance

past, I'm too busy with the present and the future, but it isn't all right now. The people don't need them. You shouldn't be proud and happy to be a queen. You should be angry and indignant!"

"Why, Joe Cary!" There was no doubt that she was indignant and angry, but it was not because she was a queen. "How can you talk like that? The idea! The very idea! I asked you to help me and if you only insult me—" She turned away so that he would not see the tears which filled her eyes.

"Oh, Tessie! Silly little girl!" His arm was around her. "I wouldn't hurt you for the world, but I have to tell you the truth. I can't lie to you the way other people do! I can't do it! I think so much of you, little Tessie! I hate to have you even play you are a queen!"

She pulled herself free and stared at him. "Play!" she cried furiously. "Play! I am a queen, Joe Cary, and you know it! Just because I've known you for years and years is no reason why you—you—" She was so angry that she could not say another word. She could not look at him either for the tears overflowed her eyes. "I wish you'd go!" she managed to stammer.

Joe never thought of going. He had a shamed sort of feeling as if he had broken a little girl's doll, and he took Tessie in his arms again and kissed the tears from her soft cheeks.

"Tessie!" he murmured. "Little Tessie!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"Don't forget Ka-kee-ta," she said to Tessie, as if Ka-kee-ta were a pocket handkerchief and must not be forgotten.

"Oh, Ka-kee-ta!" Tessie stamped her satin slipper. "I wish I could lose Ka-kee-ta! I hate to have him always at my heels!"

"It's part of the price of being a queen," Joe said gently.

Tessie looked at him and frowned sulkily. "I'm not going to pay anything to-night!" she said sharply. "I shan't take Ka-kee-ta! Come," she held out her hand to Mr. Bill. "We'll go out the other way, and he'll never know but I'm in here. I just can't be bothered with him to-night. It's so stupid to have a bodyguard when I have you." She smiled at Mr. Bill.

"You bet it is!" stammered Mr. Bill, holding her fingers tight in his big paw.

Granny watched them slip away, and then she turned to Joe.

"She's just a foolish little girl," she said, as if she were thinking aloud.

"She'll make a grand woman," prophesied Joe, and he sighed, also.

"That may be." But Granny did not seem quite as sure as Joe that Tessie would make a grand woman. "What's going to change her, Joe?" she asked curiously. "What's going to change a silly little girl into a grand woman?"

"Love," Joe told her boldly and valiantly.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Love!" Granny repeated the word. "That may be, Joe. Love does strange things. Maybe it can change Tessie. Understand, I don't blame Tessie, Joe. The poor little thing never had anything in all her life until now. No wonder her head is turned. But maybe love can turn it right again."

"It can!" insisted Joe. "Love is the strongest force in the world, you know, Granny. It is nothing for love to straighten a pretty girl's head. It's this queen business that bothers me, Granny. This fool queen business! What do you think about it, anyway?"

Granny snorted contemptuously. "I'm beginning to think that my son Pete died as big a rascal as he lived." Granny did not mince words when she told Joe what she thought. "And that's saying a good deal. I don't like these Sunshine Islands, Joe, and if I have my way, we won't stir a step toward them. I'm afraid of the savages, but I'm not telling Tessie that. Every girl dreams some day she'll be a queen and now that my girl really is a queen, I'm not the one who'll tell her she was better off when she was selling aluminum in the Evergreen."

Joe squared his shoulders as if he put a burden on them.

"Well, I will," he said stoutly. "I don't believe in deceiving people even for their own good."

Granny looked at him admiringly, but there

The Amazing Inheritance

was something more than admiration in her faded eyes. Was it pity? "You always were a brave boy, Joe Cary," she said. "And you're young enough to believe in yourself. But girls are different from anything you've met yet. You've got to handle them different. But what's the use of an old woman like me talking to you? You'll have to find out things for yourself."

"Yes," agreed Joe proudly. "I'm the kind that has to find things out for himself."

"Stay and have dinner with me?" asked Granny with cordial hospitality. "Now that Tessie's gone to Kingley's and Johnny's at that Boy Scout camp I'll be all alone if you don't stay."

"Where's Norah Lee?" Joe questioned carelessly, but he flushed a bit.

"We can ask Norah, too," Granny told him quickly. "She don't often stay for dinner. She's a great help to Tessie, Joe, but Tessie pays her good wages so I suppose Tessie is a help to her, too."

"That's the way it works out. When a fellow helps you you help him, too. And Norah would be a peach if she wasn't all for business."

"That's just—what was the word we heard so much about during the war? Camouflage? That's just camouflage, Joe. No girl is all for business on the inside even if she is on the outside. You take my word for it that inside a girl is all for romance. That's the way the good Lord made

The Amazing Inheritance

girls." And she nodded her pepper-and-salt head knowingly.

"I wonder!" Joe said eagerly, and he looked at Granny as if he would like to believe her.

"I know!" declared Granny. "And now I'll go and ask Norah Lee if she wants to eat with us, and then we can talk about these islands of Tessie's some more. I didn't know until to-day that a man could have more than one wife in the Sunshine Islands. The old king, Pete's friend, had three. It makes me wonder about Pete. But there's one thing sure, Joe Cary, Tessie shan't have but one husband. I don't care anything about their old customs!"

The Amazing Inheritance

was something more than admiration in her faded eyes. Was it pity? "You always were a brave boy, Joe Cary," she said. "And you're young enough to believe in yourself. But girls are different from anything you've met yet. You've got to handle them different. But what's the use of an old woman like me talking to you? You'll have to find out things for yourself."

"Yes," agreed Joe proudly. "I'm the kind that has to find things out for himself."

"Stay and have dinner with me?" asked Granny with cordial hospitality. "Now that Tessie's gone to Kingley's and Johnny's at that Boy Scout camp I'll be all alone if you don't stay."

"Where's Norah Lee?" Joe questioned carelessly, but he flushed a bit.

"We can ask Norah, too," Granny told him quickly. "She don't often stay for dinner. She's a great help to Tessie, Joe, but Tessie pays her good wages so I suppose Tessie is a help to her, too."

"That's the way it works out. When a fellow helps you you help him, too. And Norah would be a peach if she wasn't all for business."

"That's just—what was the word we heard so much about during the war? Camouflage? That's just camouflage, Joe. No girl is all for business on the inside even if she is on the outside. You take my word for it that inside a girl is all for romance. That's the way the good Lord made

Leaving Inheritance

Tessie, her nose in
you, and you can see
at your heels all the

declared Mr. Bill has-
ards, he did not want
a minute. It was all
odyguard, but it would
or the basement floor-
n to be so attended.
afraid of in his islands
stand beside him with an
d curiously.

told him in a whisper.
why I'm not so crazy
as I was. I never used
g, and now I'm afraid of

adulgently because he was
g, and admiringly because
le when she was afraid of
e took her hand and pressed
ee-ta, who stood in the open
with the wide questioning
ve another howl. Mr. Bill
from Tessie.

he exclaimed.

as!" Tessie shrugged her shoul-
ped the hand Mr. Bill had
just impossible! Sometimes,"

XVI

IT had never occurred to Ka-kee-ta's frizzled head that Tessie could leave the royal suite without his knowledge, not while he stood beside the door. He did not understand that the suite was a corner one with exits on two corridors, and no one had thought it necessary to tell him. So when he saw Tessie come in with Mr. Bill, when he thought that she was with Granny in the room, he gave a howl of surprise and stared at her as if she were a ghost instead of a flesh-and-blood girl in a white dinner frock and a rose wrap. Tessie frowned.

"Do be quiet, Ka-kee-ta!" she ordered impatiently. "He always makes me think of a dog," she said to Mr. Bill. "At night, you know, he just curls up here beside the door and goes to sleep. He is always here! It's so tiresome. I do think that queens have to put up with an awful lot of disagreeable things!" And she sighed.

"They get an awful lot, too," reminded Mr. Bill with a grin. "And as our wise young friend, Joseph Cary, so truthfully remarks, you have to pay for everything you get. Having Ka-kee-ta as a doormat isn't much of a price to pay for all the romance and the luxury and the——"

The Amazing Inheritance

"Oh, isn't it!" interrupted Tessie, her nose in the air. "I'll lend him to you, and you can see what fun it is to have him at your heels all the time."

"He wouldn't be lent!" declared Mr. Bill hastily, for in spite of his words, he did not want Ka-kee-ta at his heels for a minute. It was all right for Tessie to have a bodyguard, but it would be far from all right for the basement floor-walker of the Evergreen to be so attended. "What was your uncle afraid of in his islands that he trained a man to stand beside him with an ax in his hand?" he asked curiously.

"The people!" Tessie told him in a whisper. "That's another reason why I'm not so crazy over this queen business as I was. I never used to be afraid of anything, and now I'm afraid of almost everything!"

Mr. Bill laughed indulgently because he was not afraid of anything, and admiringly because Tessie was so adorable when she was afraid of almost everything. He took her hand and pressed it. Immediately Ka-kee-ta, who stood in the open door watching them with the wide questioning eyes of a child, gave another howl. Mr. Bill hastily jumped away from Tessie.

"The dickens!" he exclaimed.

"You see how it is!" Tessie shrugged her shoulders as she clasped the hand Mr. Bill had squeezed. "He is just impossible! Sometimes,"

The Amazing Inheritance

she lowered her voice as if she would not for the world let Ka-kee-ta hear what she was going to say, "I have a mind to give the whole thing up!"

Mr. Bill stared at her in horrified astonishment. "Your kingdom?" he gasped.

She nodded.

"You couldn't do it!"

"Why couldn't I?"

Mr. Bill's reason was not a very good one. "Because," he said vaguely. But when Tessie showed an impatient dissatisfaction with it he found another reason. "It isn't done, you know! Kings and queens have to stay on their thrones as long as the people want them there."

"That's exactly the idea," mourned Tessie. "As long as the people want them on thrones! But suppose the people don't want them?" She shivered as she remembered what Mr. Pracht had said happened when the Sunshine Islanders did not want the king who was on their throne.

Mr. Bill was puzzled. "What is it?" he demanded sharply. "What's happened? I could see all evening that something was the matter. When we played hearts you acted as if your mind was miles away. You let dad give you every heart in the pack. What is it? Has the special representative come? What makes you talk as if your people didn't want you for their queen?" He started to go closer and then remembered the watch-dog and walked to the door and shut it

The Amazing Inheritance

almost on Ka-kee-ta's tattooed nose. "What is it?" he asked again, and now he was very close to Tessie. He looked anxiously into her troubled face. He wanted to help her. He had never wanted to help a girl as he wanted to help Tessie.

Tessie's voice shook as she answered him. "The special representative is a prisoner in the islands. The Sons of Sunshine—I told you about them?—have captured him and locked him up. They don't want a white ruler—a white queen! And I heard to-day that when the Sunshine Islands people don't like their king, they boil him in oil!" Her lip quivered. Her eyes were big and frightened as she looked at Mr. Bill.

"I don't believe it!" declared Mr. Bill quickly. "I don't believe a word of it! Such things aren't done now! Maybe in the Dark Ages, but not now! Take it from me! It sounds like a rank movie!" he insisted.

Tessie smiled wanly. It was cheering to hear Mr. Bill declare with so much warm emphasis that he did not believe the Sunshine Islanders kept up their ancient customs. "It made me want to sell the islands right away," she faltered.

"Sell the islands!" He was shocked. "You can't do that!" he exclaimed. "Dad wouldn't let you!"

Tessie looked at him quickly, almost suspiciously. "What do you mean? What has your father and the Evergreen to do with my islands?"

The Amazing Inheritance

Mr. Bill flushed and stammered. "Nothing of course," he said. "Only he is awfully interested! He's tried to help you in every way, given you unlimited credit and advice and everything. And he wouldn't like you to do anything without his per—I mean without talking to him. I wouldn't want you to sell your islands, either. I like to think of you as a queen! You are such a peach! You should be a queen!" And his hand shot out again, and it would have found her fingers if she had not moved away from him.

"I think," she said with a quick catch of her breath, "you had better go. It must be Ka-kee-ta's bedtime!" she insisted, when he showed no sign of going.

"Darn Ka-kee-ta!" he exclaimed somewhat rudely.

But he had to go away, and when he had reluctantly said good night and disappeared down the corridor, Tessie turned impatiently to her bodyguard, who was yawning beside the door.

"You see, Ka-kee-ta," she said slowly and distinctly so that he would be sure to understand her, "nothing happened to me when I went away without you. I think I shall leave you at home often."

Ka-kee-ta shook his frizzled head and waved his ax. "The Tear of God!" he rumbled. "The king's jewel!"

Tessie looked at him, and her eyes widened.

The Amazing Inheritance

"If I leave the Tear of God with you will it be all right?" she guessed. "You aren't looking after me, are you, Ka-kee-ta? It's the king's jewel you are taking care of." And when he said never a word, but just stood and gaped at her, she plucked courage to ask him in a frightened whisper; "Ka-kee-ta, did you ever see any one boiled in oil?"

The words were scarcely across her lips before she discovered that she did not want to hear what Ka-kee-ta had seen. She did not want to know how savage her people could be. She shut the door and went to her own room, the most puzzled little queen in the world.

There were many questions to puzzle her, questions concerning the islands and Joe Cary, who was so anxious for her to abandon the islands, and Mr. Bill, and old Mr. Kingley, who was so eager for her to keep her inheritance. What difference did it make to old Mr. Kingley whether she was a queen or not? She could understand why Joe Cary wanted her to abdicate. Joe didn't believe in queens nor in kings. But Mr. Kingley—What business was it of his? And Mr. Bill! He had said he didn't believe the Sunshine Islanders were savage or cannibal. She would believe Mr. Bill, she decided with a fluttering heart. Of course he knew. And he was right! So long as she remained in Waloo the Sunshine Islanders—even the revolutionary Sons of Sunshine—could

The Amazing Inheritance

not harm her. But she couldn't remain in Waloo forever and be the queen of the Sunshine Islands, too! That wouldn't be fair. Joe Cary said it wouldn't be fair. She would ask Mr. Bill the very first thing in the morning. Mr. Bill really knew more about kings and queens than Joe Cary anyway. He had seen some of them. Mr. Bill's own mother had told her that he had seen Queen Mary of England. Oh, dear! Wouldn't she ever go to sleep?

It was a long time before her busy little brain would let her go to sleep, and it seemed no time at all after she was asleep before she was wakened by Granny, who handed her a letter. The sun was streaming through the open window with a dash and a vigor which made Tessie's sleepy eyes blink. So she had slept after all, for it was black night when she had closed her eyes and now it was bright day. She looked at the letter.

"What is it?" she asked sleepily.

"It was just sent up from the office. And it's marked important." Granny sounded important as she showed Tessie the word scrawled on the envelope. "I thought perhaps it might be something about that special representative. Maybe he has escaped from those rebels!" suggested Granny, eager to know what was inside the letter which was so important on the outside. "Really, Tessie, when I think of those Sons of Sunshine I wish Johnny was here instead of at that Boy Scout

The Amazing Inheritance

camp. I've got more confidence in a good strong American boy than I have in all the frizzle-headed, tattooed natives in the world! Even if they do carry axes in their hand."

Tessie scarcely heard Granny. She had opened the letter, but something in the black writing made her face turn white.

"What is it, Tessie?" Granny caught her shoulder. "Tell Granny what it is? Drat that Pete!" she murmured under her breath. "I wish he had run away with a circus, instead of to sea to be washed up on that island and make trouble for us all."

"It's—it's from that Mr. Pracht!" gulped Tessie. "And he says I can have until night to make up my mind to sell the islands. And he says he forgot to say that sometimes usurpers are sent to live in a leper colony. I don't want to be a leper, Granny!" And she clung to the strong hands which had reached out to clasp her.

"There, there, my lamb!" crooned Granny. "Of course you don't! And you shan't be a leper! You leave it to Granny, and get up and get dressed so you'll be ready for what comes. And that Pracht might as well understand that he's going the wrong way. He can't scare a Gilfooly. Maybe he can surprise 'em, but he can't scare 'em! Look at your Uncle Pete! Died a king! All the rebels in six cannibal islands didn't scare him a mite! If those Sunshine Islands are worth buy-

The Amazing Inheritance

ing, they're worth holding on to until we know more about them. You just write this Pracht man a letter and tell him you aren't selling any islands to-day. Perhaps then he'll offer more," she added shrewdly.

"I don't care what he offers, he can't buy my islands!" exclaimed Tessie, gathering courage from Granny's proud boast that a Gilfooly was not to be frightened. "A queen can't resign her job unless her people ask her to, and Mr. Pracht isn't one of my people. He's a Pennsylvania German. He said so."

"That's it! That's it!" declared Granny, delighted to see that Tessie's white face had turned pink again. "You just put that in the letter! What we got to do, Tessie Gilfooly, is to find out why he wants to buy those islands, and then we'll know more about selling them."

Tessie slipped into her gorgeous negligée of pink georgette and lace, thrust her feet into pink satin mules, and sat at her desk to write to Mr. Pracht that she would never think of selling her islands to anybody, that she hoped he would say no more about it. As for leper colonies and shark's oil, she was not afraid. She was a Gilfooly, of the same blood as King Pete, and the Gilfoolys were not afraid of anything or anybody.

"That's right!" indorsed Granny, who was looking over Tessie's shoulder. "They aren't!"

"E-ven reb—" Tessie's hurried pen halted, and

The Amazing Inheritance

Tessie looked at Granny. "One l or two in rebels, Granny?" she asked uncertainly.

"It don't make any difference," exclaimed Granny, "so long as there's plenty of courage in the Gilfoolys."

"Perhaps I'd better let Norah Lee write it on the typewriter." Tessie eyed her letter dubiously.

"Don't you do it, dearie! Just sign your name and put it in this envelope. There are some letters that secretaries shouldn't write. You just finish it as good as you begun it, and I guess Mr. Pracht will understand it, no matter how many l's you put in rebels."

Tessie sighed gently. "I often wish I'd finished high school, Granny," she said slowly. "Mr. Bill went to college," she added sadly as she signed her letter "Queen Teresa of the Sunshine Islands." "There!" she slipped the letter into an envelope and ran her pink tongue over the gummed flap. "If you'll give that to Ka-kee-ta and ask him to take it to Mr. Pracht. To Mr. Pracht himself!" she insisted. "When Mr. Pracht sees Ka-kee-ta and his ax, perhaps he won't be so free with his words. And while Ka-kee-ta is out, tell him to buy me some chocolates. He might as well get a five-pound box, and they can put it on the bill," she said with a right royal disregard for payment.

As she went back to her room, she passed a long

The Amazing Inheritance

mirror which flashed her a picture of a slim little girl in a lovely pink negligée, with a tousled head and a flushed face. She went back and looked in the mirror again. Suddenly she remembered that a month ago she had no lovely pink negligée, no pink satin mules, and that at this time of the morning she would have been selling aluminum in the Evergreen basement for hours. How wonderful it was! She smiled radiantly and blew a kiss to the girl in the mirror, who was smiling, too.

"Oh, Granny!" Tessie hugged her Granny. "Can you believe it? Isn't it great to be a queen?"

Granny hugged her. "I wonder," she said absently, "what Mr. Pracht will say when he reads your letter?"

Tessie snapped her fingers. She was a Gilfooly, you know, and the Gilfoolys were a fearless race.

"That for Mr. Pracht!" she exclaimed. "And that for his threats!" She snapped her fingers again. "Isn't there a law, Granny," she asked suddenly, "that protects people from threats? I'm going to ask Mr. Bill!"

"Ask Joe Cary," advised Granny. "He'll know more about law than Mr. Bill. I wouldn't be surprised if there was such a law, Tessie, and if there ain't there ought to be. It was like your wise little head to think of it. Mr. Pracht will feel smart if he finds himself in jail, won't he? Now what are you going to have for breakfast? I

The Amazing Inheritance

had some strawberries, some ham and eggs and some hot cakes."

"I'll have some, too," Tessie said, after she had giggled at the attractive picture Granny had painted of the disturbing Mr. Pracht tightly locked in jail. "And don't forget the cream! I like a lot of cream."

XVII

KA-KEE-TA should have made the round trip to Mr. Pracht in the Pioneer Hotel, which was one block from the Waloo, before Tessie was bathed, dressed and breakfasted, but he did not return by the time she had finished the last of the hot cakes. He did not return for lunch. Tessie, who had a thousand-and-one things to do, began to wonder.

"Where do you suppose he is?" she asked Granny. "What do you suppose has happened to him?"

"Maybe he met a friend," suggested Granny, who was wondering herself what had detained the queen's messenger. "I hope you'll give him a good piece of your mind when he does come back, Tessie. He shouldn't loaf when you send him on an errand. Maybe he went to lunch with a friend."

Tessie laughed to think of frizzled Ka-kee-ta and his ax going to lunch with a friend, but her face sobered when she remembered that, so far as she knew Ka-kee-ta had no friends in Waloo.

"I'm worried," she told Granny, and she looked worried. "I suppose I'm responsible for Ka-

The Amazing Inheritance

kee-ta. Do you suppose Mr. Pracht could have done anything to him?"

"I wouldn't be surprised," confessed Granny with grim reluctance. "A man who will threaten a little girl like you would do anything. Why don't you call up Joe Cary and ask him what he thinks?" Granny had called on Joe for so long that it had become a habit to consult him on every occasion.

"I'll call up Mr. Bill! He knows more than Joe Cary. Joe Cary never went to college. He only went to an art school!"

"There are some things you learn without going to college," murmured Granny, as Tessie flew to the telephone.

"Lost Ka-kee-ta!" repeated Mr. Bill over the wire, and he laughed. "I thought that was what you wanted to do."

"I never wanted to lose him!" Tessie declared indignantly. "I just wanted him to leave me alone once in awhile. I'm afraid something has happened to him."

"What could have happened to a big strong native with an ax in his hands?" Mr. Bill laughed again. He sounded anything but sympathetic. "Have you reported it to the hotel detective? He would know how to trail your bodyguard. Or the police? A man like Ka-kee-ta couldn't disappear without leaving some clue. I'll bring the store detective around if you say so?"

The Amazing Inheritance

"You needn't bother!" There was a bit of an edge in Tessie's voice, even if it was tremulous. It hurt Tessie to have her call for help regarded as a joke. "I'll speak to the hotel detective. And I'll ask Joe Cary to help me find Ka-kee-ta. But as long as your father is so interested in my islands, I wish you would ask him why the syndicate that wants to buy them stole my bodyguard?"

"Tessie!" exclaimed Mr. Bill. He stopped laughing as soon as he heard the edge in Tessie's voice. Perhaps the edge was sharp enough to cut him. "Tessie!" he said again, but she did not answer him. He hung up the receiver and hurried to get his hat. He would go right over to the Waloo and see what was the matter with Tessie. He met his father at the door.

"Where are you going?" old Mr. Kingley asked young Mr. Kingley.

"To the Waloo!" Mr. Bill answered hurriedly. "Tessie Gilfooly has lost that native bodyguard of hers."

"Lost—" Mr. Kingley caught his son by the sleeve and held him tight—"wait a minute, Bill, and tell Gray. He might as well use the story." He rubbed his hands together in his satisfaction. "My soul! We must have had a million dollars' worth of good publicity out of Queen Teresa already! Tell Gray all about it before you go, Bill. He will just have time to catch the afternoon papers."

The Amazing Inheritance

"Darn the papers!" cried Mr. Bill, trying to free himself from the paternal clutch on his sleeve. But whether he wanted to or not, he had to wait and tell Mr. Gray what Tessie had told him.

"Perhaps you shouldn't publish it yet," he said doubtfully, when at last he was free to go.

"Not publish it!" His father was shocked at such a thought. "Of course it should be published. Why not? Queen Teresa wants to find her bodyguard, doesn't she? If the story is published, all Waloo will help her. It can't hurt her to have it published. What could happen?" He looked hungrily at his son as if, perhaps, he scented more publicity.

"She could be boiled in oil if the Sons of Sunshine got hold of her," muttered Mr. Bill, as he remembered what Tessie told him was sometimes done to monarchs in the Sunshine Islands.

"Bill! Don't be flippant as well as foolish," counseled his disgusted father. "Queens aren't boiled in oil now. That makes a fine story, Gray. A fine story! I bet the other stores, the Bon Ton and the Mammoth, envy us our queen!" He laughed with good-natured triumph. "You can run along now, Bill, and tell Queen Teresa we want to help her in every way we can. Be sure and put that in your story, Gray, that we are helping the queen in every way we can to find her bodyguard."

But Mr. Bill had delayed too long. By the time

The Amazing Inheritance

he told the story to Mr. Gray, Joe Cary had taken his hat and gone to the Waloo. Joe found only Granny in the big sunny room, for Tessie had gone over to Marvin, Phelps & Stokes, to ask Mr. Marvin if there wasn't a law which would make Mr. Pracht stop threatening her, and stop stealing Ka-kee-ta. Tessie knew that Mr. Pracht had stolen Ka-kee-ta.

"I wanted her to wait until you came," Granny said. "But she wouldn't do it. She feels responsible for Ka-kee-ta. She said if it hadn't been for her, he would be in the Sunshine Islands this minute, safe and sound."

"He would probably have been killed by the Sons of Sunshine," corrected Joe. "You know I think I'm getting a line on this, Granny. And it's bigger than I thought. I made it my business to talk to that Pracht last night, and something he said roused my suspicions. If I'm right, Tessie has a big power against her. She wants to be careful."

"What is it, Joe?" begged Granny. "What was Pete up to before he died?" She was sure that Pete had been up to something, and her voice shook as she begged Joe to tell her what it was.

"I'll tell you just as soon as I'm sure," promised Joe. "I'm going after Tessie now. She shouldn't have gone out alone, not after defying Pracht as she did."

The Amazing Inheritance

"She wasn't alone. Johnny came back from camp this morning, and he went with her."

"Johnny!" Joe laughed as if a Boy Scout would be little protection against the power he feared. When he saw Granny's worried face, he patted her arm comfortingly. "Don't you worry, Granny. Everything's all right!" he declared. "I'll bring Tessie right back!"

But when he reached the sumptuous offices of Marvin, Phelps & Stokes, Tessie had left.

"About five minutes ago," Bert Douglas told him. "Rum story she had to tell, wasn't it? Of course Mr. Marvin is going to make that Pracht stop frightening her. We don't stand for that sort of thing in this country. She was as pretty as a picture when she told her story. But, Cary, there must be something queer about those islands. Mr. Marvin thinks so, too, but Mr. Phelps is nuts for them. He says it takes him back to the days when he wanted to be a pirate."

"Were they able to help Tessie at all?" asked Joe. What did he care about Mr. Marvin—or even Mr. Phelps?

"Not much. We've had a wire from Pitts, the special representative, from San Francisco. I suppose when he comes the mystery will be cleared." And he chuckled. The mystery intrigued Bert as much as the islands did Mr. Phelps.

"San Francisco!" exclaimed Joe. "I thought he was a prisoner on the islands?"

The Amazing Inheritance

"I rather think Pracht sent us that word to scare the queen. Anyway, Mr. Marvin had a wire this morning that seems all right. I was just going to tell Miss Gilfooly when she came in, the Boy Scout at her heels. She mustn't do anything until Pitts arrives. But I expect, and I know Mr. Marvin thinks so, too, that Ka-kee-ta lost his way. Miss Gilfooly probably found him at the hotel when she went back."

Joe looked at him. "You don't think there is anything in Pracht's threat to make trouble for Tessie if she doesn't sell the islands to his syndicate, do you?" he asked bluntly.

Bert regarded him with amused surprise. "My dear fellow, what could he do? Use your gray matter! Those islands are in the Pacific Ocean, two hundred and eighty-seven miles south of Honolulu. They are very beautiful and may be very valuable, but Pracht wouldn't resort to crime to get them. No syndicate would. It's ridiculous!"

"Two hundred and eighty-seven miles south of Honolulu," repeated Joe. "And much nearer to the United States than Honolulu. Don't forget that! There are people, Douglas, who would be glad to get control of a group of islands near the United States."

Bert jumped to his feet and stared at Joe. "What do you mean, Cary? What do you mean?" he demanded.

But Joe would not tell him what he meant.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Think it over," he advised, instead. "Think several things over, and perhaps you'll understand that Pracht means all, and more, than he threatens, that he is determined to get possession of those islands. We've got to find Ka-kee-ta. I'll trot back to the Waloo. Perhaps Tessie will be there by the time I am."

"Sure to be," agreed puzzled Bert. "She left a good ten minutes ago. But I wish you'd make your meaning a little clearer, Joe. I'd like to have it a little clearer before I speak to Mr. Marvin."

Joe was halfway to the elevator before Bert finished, and he did not turn back to explain his meaning. He hurried to the hotel, but Tessie was not there. Johnny was on the davenport with a big box of chocolates.

"I don't know where Tessie went," he told Joe languidly. "She asked me to go in the Bon Bon Box, and buy her five pounds of chocolates, and I did. I saw her get into a car and——"

"What car?" snapped Joe. "It wasn't her own car! Her own car was standing in front of the hotel. I saw it when I came in."

"Not her own car!" cried Granny, and her face turned a pasty gray as she stared at Joe. "Not her own car, Joe! Then somebody's kidnapped her! I know they have! Poor little Tessie!"

XVIII

BLESS me!" Mr. Kingley stared unbelievably into Joe Cary's excited face. "Queen Teresa kidnaped? Nonsense, Cary! Such things aren't done in Waloo in broad daylight. You say it's true? What a story! I must have Gray telephone the *Gazette* that we have a front page story for them. Bless me!"

"Never mind the publicity end of this now, Mr. Kingley!" exclaimed Joe, so disgusted that he could scarcely speak calmly. "Let's think of Tessie first and the Evergreen second for a change."

Mr. Kingley opened his mouth to say that the Evergreen must always come first, and people, no matter who they were, second, but as he looked at Joe, he suddenly decided that some explanations were better left unmade.

"The little queen is all right!" he insisted instead. "Of course she is! This is Waloo, the United States, not a savage island. Nothing could happen to Miss Gilfooly in Waloo. She's all right! What makes you think she was kidnaped? Who kidnaped her? Where was that frizzle-headed bodyguard? Why wasn't he on his job?" He shot the questions, one after another at Joe, and then was impatient because they were not answered.

The Amazing Inheritance

"You forget that Ka-kee-ta disappeared first," Joe said, as quietly as he could when he was so full of disgust and impatience. "Tessie was trying to find him when she was carried off. I don't know who did it, but I'd be willing to bet that a towheaded man with a big nose had a hand in it—a big hand!" He looked keenly at Mr. Kingley, as he described the man he thought had had a hand in kidnaping Tessie.

Mr. Kingley snorted contemptuously. "Bets won't get you anywhere," he said scornfully. "What you want are a few facts. Do you know where she was and what she was doing when she was kidnaped?"

"Her brother Johnny saw her get into a car, and as soon as the door was shut, the car dashed up the street and around a corner."

Mr. Kingley rubbed his hands together and nodded approvingly. "Now you're talking. You show you have something to work with. I don't suppose you have the number of the car?" There was considerable superiority in his voice because, of course, Joe did not have the number.

"Yes, I have! And a description, too. The car was a dark blue limousine and its license number was 13,023!" He moved closer to Mr. Kingley and eyed him oddly, but Mr. Kingley did not become at all excited when he heard the license number.

"13,023," he repeated slowly. "Well, have

The Amazing Inheritance

you found whose car that is? It seems simple enough now, Cary. Whose car is it?"

Joe looked at him. Was it possible that he didn't know whose car bore the license number 13,023? Joe watched him like a hawk as he told him whose car it was.

"The car is listed," he said slowly, "as belonging to Mr. W. A. Kingley—Mr. William A. Kingley!"

"No!" exclaimed Mr. William A. Kingley in a surprise that seemed genuine, although Joe could not believe that any man would be ignorant of the license number of his own car. "It can't be!"

"Owner of the Evergreen," went on Joe, with a thump on the table to drive the fact home.

"It's been stolen!" declared Mr. Kingley excitedly. "My car has been stolen! I don't know a thing about this! I don't even believe it!" he exclaimed shrilly.

"When I got the information from the police," Joe told him slowly, "I telephoned to your house to learn if your car was there."

"And it was!" insisted Mr. Kingley, leaning forward in his big chair. "Of course it was!"

"It was not!" Mr. Kingley sank back with a groan. "And your chauffeur was found in the garage, tied and gagged!"

"Bless me!" In the face of such facts Mr. Kingley could only stammer and sputter. "Who

The Amazing Inheritance

could—who could—who found him?” he demanded sharply.

“Your daughter telephoned to the garage for the car, and when it wasn’t brought around, she went herself to see what was the matter. She found the chauffeur on the floor tied and gagged.”

“But what did he say? What did he say?” Mr. Kingley had jumped up from his big chair and was tramping up and down the office with quick excited steps.

“He said he had the car all ready to drive out, when two men came in and threatened him with a gun. They gagged him, tied him up and drove the car out of the garage. He didn’t know either of them, he said. Never saw them before. They were both masked, but he thought one of them, at least, was a Jap.” He stopped and looked at Mr. Kingley significantly.

“A Jap!” repeated Mr. Kingley aghast. He stared at Joe, and he tried with all of his might to understand what Joe so plainly wanted him to understand. “I never employed a Jap in my life,” he said hurriedly. “Not in any capacity!”

“Didn’t you?” questioned Joe, with even more of that puzzling significance.

“A Jap kidnaping the Queen of the Sunshine Islands,” Mr. Kingley said slowly. His eyes brightened. “Such pub—I mean,” as he caught the indignant flash in Joe’s eyes—“I mean, I hope it won’t lead to any international complication.”

The Amazing Inheritance

"I hope not," agreed Joe, wishing he could raise the top of Mr. Kingley's head, with its shining scalp and fringe of pepper-and-salt hair, and take a look at his mental machinery. "You can't tell me anything more then, Mr. Kingley? You don't know anything about this?" His eyes seemed to be boring into Mr. Kingley's very soul.

"Know? How should I know anything?" demanded Mr. Kingley, and he looked insulted.

"Several little things made me think that possibly you might know more about the Sunshine Islands and their queen than you admit," Joe told him with more of that disagreeable significance. "Maybe you know more about the Sons of Sunshine than I do," he added, as Mr. Kingley turned away with a muttered exclamation.

"Yes, yes," he said hastily. "Bill told me about them, that they had threatened to make trouble for Miss Gilfooly. I told Bill then that she should ask for police protection, but Bill laughed at me and said Ka-kee-ta with his ax was worth a platoon of police."

"I thought you would know about them," Joe went on completely ignoring what Mr. Bill said. "And perhaps you know about the special representative—I believe his name is Pitts? The Sons of Sunshine claimed they had him a prisoner."

"I don't know a word about him!" Mr. Kingley seemed pained to hear that Joe thought that he did. "I don't see why you come here, Cary,

The Amazing Inheritance

and talk to me as if I were implicated in this kidnaping. Why aren't you running down this clue you have? Did Ethel telephone to the insurance company? Who got the number anyway? Are you sure that it's correct?"

"I'm sure. Johnny Gilfooly took the number, and he's a Boy Scout and trained to observe."

"Why wasn't he looking after his sister? Aren't Boy Scouts trained to take care of their sisters?" Mr. Kingley sounded quite as unreasonable as he looked.

"Tessie sent him into the Bon Bon Box for some chocolates——"

"Then he didn't see his sister kidnaped?" Mr. Kingley interrupted quickly.

"Yes, he did. He was just coming out when he saw Tessie get into the car. It dashed away, but not before he had snatched his pencil from his pocket and written the number on the box of candy. He did it mechanically, and when Tessie didn't come home, we were glad he did. It's the only clue we have. It is mighty strange that she should have been carried away in your car, Mr. Kingley!" he insisted.

"Very, very strange," agreed Mr. Kingley with a frown. "And very strange that I didn't hear about the car until you came in. Why didn't Ethel telephone to me?"

"Your line was busy. And Bill— Where is your son Bill, Mr. Kingley?" he asked sharply.

The Amazing Inheritance

"My son Bill! Why—why—" What on earth was Joe Cary driving at. No wonder he stammered.

It seemed to Joe that he was just stammering to gain time.

"Yes, your son Bill!" he repeated sharply.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Kingley.

"Just what I say. Where's young Bill Kingley?" insisted Joe, growing more suspicious every minute.

"Who wants Bill Kingley?" asked a voice from the doorway, and Mr. Bill himself came in. He looked excited and worried. "I say, dad, have you heard? Queen Teresa has been kidnaped! We've got to find her! There are three reporters out here."

"Reporters! Why should they come to me?" wondered Mr. Kingley, chafing under the fiery gaze of Joe Cary.

"Tessie was carried off in your car," Joe reminded him. "I should think the police, as well as the reporters, would want to talk to you. The Queen of the Sunshine Islands was found in the basement of your store, and now she has been carried off in your car. It sounds——"

"How!" interrupted Mr. Bill, stepping in front of his shrinking father and facing Joe. "How does it sound to you, Cary?" he asked thirstily.

"Queer!" Joe told him flatly. "Darned queer! But if you don't tell all you know now, Mr. King-

The Amazing Inheritance

ley, you'll have to come through some day!" He regarded Mr. Kingley with an odd combination of eager hope and hot defiance. Would Mr. Kingley tell all he knew now?

But Mr. Kingley had stood all he was going to stand from Joe Cary. "You—you—" he stammered furiously and had to stop for breath. "You're discharged! Discharged! Do you hear? I won't let any employee talk to me as if I were a kidnaper and a thief!"

"Yes, you will!" Joe dared to say to his purple face. "Unless you prove you aren't a kidnaper and a thief! And you'd better not discharge me! I suspect too much! When I'm ready to leave, I'll resign. You had better go now and talk to your reporters," he added with contempt. "You'll miss the afternoon papers if you don't. And that would be too bad, when you have some more publicity for the Evergreen."

"What do you mean, Joe?" asked Mr. Bill, who could not make anything of the eager words that Joe was uttering, and that made his father so apoplectic that he could only gasp and gurgle and shake his fist at Joe as he left the room. "What do you mean?" Joe seemed to mean so much more than he said.

"I haven't time to tell you now!" Joe exclaimed brusquely. "I must find Tessie!" He would have brushed by Mr. Bill, as if Mr. Bill were only a

The Amazing Inheritance

part of the office furniture, but Mr. Bill clutched his arm.

"I'm going to find her, too!" he insisted. "I'm going to find her! Where do you suppose she is? What could have happened to her?" He shivered as he thought of what might have happened to Tessie. "I don't suppose those Sons of Sunshine would stop at anything, would they?" His voice shook as he asked the question.

Joe stood still and looked at him curiously. "Yes," he said as if he knew what he was talking about. "I think there are some things the Sons of Sunshine will not attempt—not in Waloo. Come on, if you're going with me. Do you happen to know," he stopped as a thought flashed through his brain, "do you happen to know if Tessie had the Tear of God with her?"

Mr. Bill shook his head, and the anxious look in his face deepened. Would it make it better or worse for Tessie if she had the royal jewel with her?

"I don't know," he confessed. "She usually did have it around her neck or somewhere else in a safety-bag. Mrs. Gilfooly would know," he suggested when Joe frowned and said nothing.

"Of course," Joe shrugged his shoulders and threw back his head. "Of course, Granny will know!"

XIX

WHEN Tessie came out of the big building which housed the offices of Marvin, Phelps Stokes and told Johnny to run into the Bon Bon Box for some chocolates, she saw a big blue limousine draw up to the curb beside her. She recognized the car at once. She had driven in it too many times not to know that it was the Kingley car. When the chauffeur jumped out and came toward her, she did not recognize him, and she thought carelessly that Mrs. Kingley had done what she had threatened to do, hired a Japanese chauffeur.

"They look so smart," Mrs. Kingley had said. "And they are so clever."

"And so unreliable," Mr. Kingley had added, and he had insisted that when all the American men were employed, it would be time enough to hire a Jap.

But Mrs. Kingley had evidently had her way, and Tessie smiled as the chauffeur stopped beside her, bowed humbly, and asked her if she would please come to the car. Tessie turned at once. She naturally thought that Ethel Kingley, or possibly Mrs. Kingley—young Mr. Bill's mother—wanted to speak to her. And although she knew that it is not the thing to order a queen to come

The Amazing Inheritance

here or go there, still the Kingleys were more than queens to her, and with a thumping heart she went to the car. She even entered it without a question, all aglow with curiosity to hear what Ethel Kingley or Mrs. Kingley—the lordly Mr. Bill's mother—had to say to her.

Before she really realized that there was no one in the car, the chauffeur had sent the machine leaping forward. It rounded a corner on two wheels, and if the traffic policeman had not been engaged in a warm argument with two men in small cars, each of whom wanted the right of way at the same time, it would never have gone any further, for it was breaking the traffic laws with every revolution of its red wheels.

Tessie could have pounded on the glass which separated her from the chauffeur, but it never occurred to her to do that. She thought she had misunderstood the chauffeur and that Ethel Kingley or Mrs. Kingley had asked her to come to the Kingley residence. She was sorry she had not had time to tell Johnny where she was going, but Johnny would take the box of chocolates home and would tell Granny that she had gone to the Kingleys, so that Granny would not worry. If Ka-kee-ta had returned, he would make a fuss because she had the Tear of God. She felt for it in its safety bag around her slim waist. But if Ka-kee-ta wanted to go with her, he should not

The Amazing Inheritance

take all day for a little errand which should have required only half an hour.

She wondered if Ka-kee-ta had returned. Perhaps she should stop at the Waloo and inquire. She leaned forward 'to speak to the chauffeur. She never could remember to use the silken tube which hung at the side of the car. But the limousine swerved to the left and dashed down a mean little street, which was not on the way to the Kingleys' big plaster-and-timbered mansion. She knew it wasn't. She had never gone that way before. Why—Why——

Tessie did pound on the glass then, but the chauffeur never turned his head. He just swung the car around another corner, and down another narrow street, and stopped before a brick house. He jumped out and opened the door and motioned to Tessie to step out. But Tessie never moved a muscle. She sat on the broad gray seat of the limousine, as if she never would step out.

"Suppose you take me home now," she said coldly and calmly, although inwardly she was anything but calm and cold. "I know Mrs. Kingley isn't here. And Miss Kingley isn't here, either. You've made a mistake. Take me to the Waloo Hotel at once!"

She spoke like a queen, as if she were accustomed to issuing orders and to being obeyed, and not at all like the frightened little girl she really felt. She told herself that it was ridiculous to

The Amazing Inheritance

feel frightened. Nothing could happen to her! Not on the street in Waloo in broad daylight!

It made her feel safer to see a group of small boys playing ball on the vacant lot next to the red brick house. One of the boys failed to catch the ball, and it rolled almost under the car.

"Take me home!" ordered Tessie, in her most royal manner.

But the chauffeur only showed his teeth. They made a white streak in his yellow face as he motioned toward the door of the red brick house.

"Ka-kee-ta," he said very slowly and distinctly. "You want Ka-kee-ta?"

"Ka-kee-ta!" That was a very different pair of shoes. So Miss Kingley, or perhaps it was Mrs. Kingley, had found Ka-kee-ta—although what he was doing away down here, miles from the Waloo, Tessie could not imagine—and had sent the chauffeur to take her to him. How kind! How very kind of the Kingleys. She jumped up, eager questions tumbling from her lips. "Why is he here? Why didn't he come home? Is he hurt?" For she was sure that nothing but an injury would keep Ka-kee-ta away from her and from the Tear of God. She was glad she had the Tear of God in the safety bag around her waist. She could show Ka-kee-ta that it was safe. Her face whitened as she thought that Ka-kee-ta might be, must be, badly injured. But still she hesitated to go to him. She stood on the running board of the car

The Amazing Inheritance

and looked up and down the narrow little street.

"Ka-kee-ta, he want you!" exclaimed the chauffeur, and he would have taken her arm to help her, but she pushed him away. She had taken a dislike to him, she did not know why, but she did not want him to touch her, although it was kind of him to bring her to Ka-kee-ta.

She glanced at the red brick house. Was that Ka-kee-ta's frizzled head at an upper window? It looked like it. So he was not badly injured, or he would not be at the window. She drew a long breath of relief. She would go and see what was the matter with him, and if it was nothing serious, she would give him a good big piece of her mind for worrying her. Of course, a queen would have to look after her bodyguard even if her bodyguard had been disobedient and careless. Indeed she would tell Ka-kee-ta what she thought of him.

She stepped forward hurriedly, and in her eagerness to tell Ka-kee-ta how disobedient he had been, she dropped her little beaded bag. It fell from the big embroidered pocket of her Canton crepe frock and rolled under the car, but Tessie never knew it. The chauffeur, who was close at her side, never knew it, either.

The door of the red brick house opened before Tessie could ring the bell, and she went in. The chauffeur waited until the door closed behind her, and then ran back to his car. He jumped in and drove rapidly away. The small boy in search of

The Amazing Inheritance

his ball had to wait a minute, until the car had dashed away. And then he saw the beaded bag lying in the street beside the curb and beside the ball.

"Crickey!" he exclaimed, holding it up for the other boys to see. "Look what I found!"

There was no one in the hall as the outside door closed behind Tessie. She stood still for a second, feeling very small and neglected. Since she became a queen, she had been met at front doors with more or less ceremony, and it puzzled her that no one met her now. There was a door at her right. She walked toward it. She could not remember at just which window she had caught that glimpse of a frizzled head. Perhaps Ka-kee-ta was in the room at the right. But when she opened the door, she did not see Ka-kee-ta. She saw Frederic Pracht.

He stepped forward. "Welcome!" he said pleasantly. "Welcome, Your Majesty!"

"Why—why—" stammered Tessie, so surprised she could do nothing but stammer. She sent a hurried glance around the room, but she could not see a trace of her bodyguard. "I thought Ka-kee-ta was here," she managed to say after she had swallowed twice, and impatiently tossed her head to free the frightened lump in her throat.

Mr. Pracht laughed softly, unpleasantly. "This is the Waloo headquarters of the Sons of Sun-

The Amazing Inheritance

shine," he explained gently, and as if she should know that Ka-kee-ta would never be found at the headquarters of that revolutionary organization.

"The Sons of Sunshine," repeated Tessie faintly. The bright color left her face, her bones suddenly felt starchless and limp, but she looked bravely at Mr. Pracht. She remembered that Granny had told her that the Gilfoolys were never afraid. She must not let Mr. Pracht think that a Gilfooly could be afraid, but she half closed her eyes and wished with all of her heart that Joe Cary were with her—or Mr. Bill! If only Mr. Bill were there, she would not mind the unpleasant little smile with which Mr. Pracht was regarding her. She would not mind anything!

"Yes. I am sure that you are going to be a most amiable and obliging queen, and grant the Sons of Sunshine what they ask," Mr. Pracht said, and his voice was far more pleasant than his smile. It was too pleasant, so very pleasant that if Tessie had been any one but a valiant Gilfooly, she would have fainted immediately. "If you refuse," went on the unpleasantly pleasant voice, "you will have to remain here until you see how reasonable their demands are. A strange people, Your Majesty—a strange people! And they have strange customs in their far-away islands. I think I told you of some of them?" And he looked at her and shook his thatched towhead.

Tessie straightened herself proudly. She

The Amazing Inheritance

would not let him see how frightened she was. She would die first.

"You told me of one," she said as scornfully as she could, when she had no starch at all left in her bones. "Something about boiling the kings they don't like in shark oil." And she managed a contemptuous toss of her head, as if she did not believe a word of Mr. Pracht's story.

"Yes," he agreed cheerfully. "That is one of their little customs. But I am sure that they will not have to resort to it soon again. You cannot blame them for wanting a native ruler. You really have no claim on them. Just because your uncle was an unscrupulous man, and influenced the old king to disinherit his sons, is no reason why the people should have to accept another white ruler when they don't want one." He would have gone on to tell Tessie other things about the islands and the rebels, but she interrupted him.

"What do you want of me?" she asked bluntly.

"I told you. Your rights to the Sunshine Islands," he told her as bluntly.

But Tessie, soft, little, frightened Tessie, felt the hot blood of the Gilfoolys rush through her. It seemed to put the starch back in her bones so that she could stand boldly before this hateful, smiling man. Her islands! The very idea! Words Joe Cary had said rushed through her mind. It was funny that she should remember what Joe had said about responsibilities and du-

The Amazing Inheritance

ties now. But Joe was right. She did have responsibilities and duties. So instead of telling Mr. Pracht exactly what she thought of him, she swallowed the hot words which rushed to her lips, tossed her head, and looked at him questioningly. She must meet craft with craft.

"How do I know that you are what you say?" she asked doubtfully. "You tell me that you represent the Sons of Sunshine, and that the Sons of Sunshine want a native ruler, but I have only your word for it. You must have some credentials or something. I can't dispose of my rights to the islands my Uncle Pete left me and turn the people over to just any one. That wouldn't be right! Joe Cary—" And suddenly she remembered something else Joe Cary had told her. She stared at Mr. Pracht with big astonished eyes. "Joe Cary told me once that there was some country that would like to get possession of my islands so it would have a base, I think he said, nearer the United States. He said the Japanese would give their eyeteeth to get control of the Sunshine Islands. I remember all about it now. How do I know you aren't acting for the Japanese, instead of for the Sons of Sunshine?" she asked shrilly.

He jumped, and all the muscles of his face seemed to tighten as he stared at her. "Japanese!" he repeated sharply.

"Yes. And it was a Jap who drove the car that brought me here," remembered Tessie, put-

The Amazing Inheritance

ting two and two together. "I would never sell my islands to the Japanese!" she declared firmly. "Never! I don't trust them! And it wouldn't be patriotic! Joe said it wouldn't! And the Baileys, who lived next to us before I was a queen, were from California, and they told me things about the Japanese. If you are working for them, you can tell them I would never think of selling my islands to them!" And she turned away as if to let him know that her decision was made and the interview was over.

Out on the steps, a small boy with a beaded bag in his hand was ringing the doorbell. It sent a loud peal through the house.

"Some one is at your front door," Tessie told Mr. Pracht, who stood biting his nails, and frowning at her as though he had not heard the bell.

"Let it ring," he muttered staring at her. Suddenly he shrugged his shoulders. He had decided on his course of action. "You want Ka-kee-ta?" he said curtly. "Come upstairs."

"I thought you said he wasn't here," she exclaimed. "That surprised me, for I was sure I saw him at the window."

"Come upstairs," repeated Mr. Pracht. "Ka-kee-ta needs you."

Of course, if one of her people needed her, there was nothing for a queen to do but follow Mr. Pracht up the stairs and down the hall. Outside the front door, a small boy stuffed a beaded bag

The Amazing Inheritance

in his pocket and ran down the steps and up the street.

Mr. Pracht threw open the door of a room at the end of the hall, and stood aside for Tessie to enter. She hesitated for the room was dark. It seemed to have no light but from the open door, and she could see nothing in it but shadows.

"Ka-kee-ta?" she called from the threshold. "Ka-kee-ta, are you there?" She was almost sure that Ka-kee-ta was not there, but before she could say so, she was pushed over the threshold and into the darkened room. The door slammed behind her.

"You will stay there until you agree to give up your rights to the Sunshine Islands!" Mr. Pracht called through the door. "Your rights to the islands and the Tear of God! And the sooner you agree the better. Sharks have sharp teeth, you know!"

XX

THE afternoon papers carried the story of the mysterious disappearance of Queen Teresa and her bodyguard, but strangely enough, there was very little in the story about the Evergreen. Indeed the store was merely mentioned in the closing paragraph which reminded Waloo where Queen Teresa had been found.

Granny had been interviewed, and she had tearfully told of the appearance of a white-headed, big-nosed, fat man who had wanted to buy the Sunshine Islands, and who had threatened the queen with all sorts of barbarous cruelties if she did not abdicate at once. Granny made no bones about telling the press what she knew of Frederic Pracht, which was little, and what she thought of him, which was much.

"I don't believe the Sons of Sunshine have anything to do with this," she insisted. "I think it was all that Pracht man. He stole the marriage license of her father and mother, and now he's stolen her. I know he has!"

"Be careful, Granny," cautioned Joe with a worried frown. "You don't want to say anything that will make it worse for Tess."

"No, I don't!" choked Granny. "But I think

The Amazing Inheritance

people should know the truth. I'm not as pleased with this queen business as I was, Joe. I used to think it was grand to be a queen, and there are parts of it that are pleasant, I must say, but there are other parts that I don't hold with at all. I don't see how Pete stood it all alone, away off there in the Pacific Ocean. I've just about made up my mind that Tessie shan't ever go there. She's too little and helpless. What could she do, if those savages should turn against her? You don't think any one would hurt little Tessie, do you, Joe? She's all right, isn't she?" And she went closer to Joe and peered into his face so that her eyes, as well as her ears, could tell her what Joe thought. "You'll find her for me, won't you, Joe?"

"Sure, we'll find her!" declared Joe, with far more confidence than he felt. "The police—every officer in Waloo!—is trying to find her!"

"I'll bet the Boy Scouts can find her!" bragged Johnny, who was thrilled to the very marrow to think that his sister—his own sister who was a queen—had been kidnaped. Gee whizz! what would the fellows say!

Joe gave a start and looked at Johnny. "Thunder!" he said slowly, and then he added more quickly, "Johnny, I believe you've said something! Who's at the head of your Scouts?"

"We got a Scoutmaster for every troop," boasted Johnny, but Joe did not wait for him to

The Amazing Inheritance

finish. Joe was at the telephone impatiently asking Central for heaven's sake to give him the number he wanted, and not half a dozen numbers he couldn't use.

In an incredibly short time, each Scoutmaster in the city had been asked to have the boys in his troop help find the missing queen of the Sunshine Islands.

"Your boys have been taught to observe," Joe eagerly told the Scoutmasters. "Perhaps one of them saw the car which carried off Miss Gilfooly." Joe never could speak of Tessie as Queen Teresa. It was too ridiculous, and then he did not believe in queens. "The number is 13,023. Just get in touch with your Scouts, and ask them if they have seen it. I know it's just a chance, but Waloo is so big and Miss Gilfooly is so little that we have to snatch at every chance. Her brother is a Scout, you know," he added, while Johnny stood beside him all puffed with pride.

"We'll do our best!" promised the Scoutmasters. "And our boys are all over town. If one of them saw the car, I'm sure he'll report at once. Sorry about the queen. She seemed a nice little girl!"

"She is a nice little girl!" declared Joe, with considerable emphasis.

"You'll find her all right," prophesied the Scoutmaster. "Queens can't be kidnaped in this country."

The Amazing Inheritance

"Miss Gilfooly was kidnaped!" Joe reminded him curtly. "If you hear anything, call me up at once, at the Waloo!"

He did not feel quite as confident as the Scout-master, as he hung up the receiver, but he nodded encouragingly to Granny.

"They'll find her," he said.

"I'm sure I hope so," wailed Granny. "Poor little Tessie! I never should have allowed her to be a queen! I might have known there would be trouble! Queens aren't as fashionable as they were."

"No," agreed Joe. "They aren't. Gee whizz, Granny!" He jumped to his feet and stared down at Granny. "Where do you suppose Tessie is? And Ka-kee-ta? I'd like to ring old Kingley's neck!" he said fiercely.

Granny stumbled to her feet and stared at him. "What has he got to do with it?" she said quickly. "What has Mr. Kingley got to do with Tessie's being kidnaped, Joe?" She caught his arm and held it tight as she questioned him.

"That," Joe told her with a frown, "is something I'm going to find out."

"But there must be something that makes you think he had a hand in it?" insisted Granny, clinging to his arm.

"Nothing definite," scowled Joe. "But it was his car that carried Tessie away!"

Granny clutched his arm tighter and shook him.

The Amazing Inheritance

"You don't think Mr. Bill had a hand in it too, Joe?" she cried shrilly. "You don't blame Mr. Bill too, do you?"

"No!" Joe shook his head. He did not see how Mr. Bill could be blamed. Mr. Bill had been working untiringly to find a clue which would lead him to Tessie. He had sworn a mighty oath that he would not close his eyes until he found Tessie. "No," Joe told Granny, "I don't think Bill Kingley knows any more than I do."

"Oh!" Granny released Joe's arm and dropped into a chair. "I thought perhaps you might mean that Tessie had eloped with Mr. Bill, and his father knew about it. I thought that was what you might mean when you said you'd like to wring old Mr. Kingley's neck."

"No, I didn't mean that!" But Joe did not tell her what he did mean. He just stood and stared at the telephone, as if he would force it to ring and tell him where Tessie was.

Granny threw her handkerchief over her face and broke into loud lamentations. Johnny ran to her.

"Don't you cry, Granny! Don't you cry! The Scouts'll find Tessie all right! I wish you'd let me go and help them!"

Granny put her arms around him tight. "No, you can't go, Johnny!" she sobbed. "You can't go! The Sons of Sunshine might take you, too. You stay here with me!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"It's dreadful!" Norah Lee told Joe. Norah's face was white and anxious, and her voice shook. "If you only knew where to look!"

"That's it!" groaned Joe. "We haven't any idea where to look! It's worse than a needle in a haystack! She might be anywhere!"

"Poor little queen!" sighed Norah. "You know, Joe, there have been moments when I've envied her. I know it was silly, but I did! It was so romantic, you know, and old Mr. Kingley and everybody made such a fuss over her. The world just seemed to center around Tessie Gilfooly. The rest of us weren't there at all. We all envied her!"

"You can't envy her now!" Joe had nothing but scorn for one who envied a queen. He looked oddly at Norah. He could not see why Norah should envy any girl.

"No, we can't envy her now. I'm awfully sorry for you, Joe," she said after a moment. "You must be nearly crazy!"

"It's not knowing where she is," Joe said simply. "And when you think what savage brutes those Sunshine Sons really are, it's enough to make us all crazy!"

"Poor old Joe!" And Norah put her hand on his and squeezed his fingers with friendly sympathy. "Poor old Joe!"

"I'm not any good at all," frowned Joe. "That's what takes the starch out of a fellow. I

The Amazing Inheritance

don't know what to do! Bill Kingley is running around town like a mad dog, but he isn't getting anywhere. We aren't any of us as helpful as Johnny here."

Johnny raised his head from Granny's shoulder. "The Boy Scouts'll help!" he insisted. "You just see!"

At almost that very moment Charlie Deakin, the young Scoutmaster of Beaver Troop in North-east Waloo, was going home in the early twilight. He had been thrilled to his heels when Joe called him to the telephone, and asked him to help find Queen Teresa. He had been interested in the queen ever since he read the first story in the *Gazette*. He had gone to the sale in the Evergreen basement for the benefit of the Sunshine Island's shoe fund, and had bought an aluminum stewpan which he had given to his mother, to her undying amazement. He often had seen Tessie driving with her bodyguard and had admired both of them immensely. And now the queen had been kidnaped! He could not believe that any one would be so dastardly as to kidnap such a charming little girl. But if any one had, he would like to find her. He would give everything he had in the world to find her. And as he went home in the early twilight, he considered several plans for calling his troop together, and setting the boys to the task so that they really would find Queen

The Amazing Inheritance

Teresa. At the corner he met Neddie Black, who was an ardent young Scout.

"Hello, Ned!" called Charlie. "I'm glad I met you! I've work for you to do! What's that in your hand?" For from Neddie's fingers dangled a beaded bag, something no Scout would carry.

"I picked it up in the street," explained Neddie, "but I can't find the owner. I thought it belonged to a girl who went into that red-brick house, but no one answered when I rang the bell. There is a dollar and seventy-five cents in it, a vanity case, a handkerchief, a pencil, a lot of samples, some pieces out of the newspaper, a veil, three chocolates and a piece of paper. See!" And he showed Charlie a card on which several words were scribbled.

"'Talcum powder,'" read Charlie Deakin. "'Frederick O'Brien's South Sea Island book!'" His voice rose excitedly. "'Insect powder.' 'Cocoanut oil for Ka-kee-ta!'" Where did you find this, Ned?" He gave Ned a little shake, as he questioned him eagerly.

Ned told him that he had been playing ball with a bunch of fellows in the vacant lot over there—he nodded in the direction of the red-brick house—and a limousine had driven up to the curb. Their ball had rolled under the car—the license number was 13,023—Neddie proudly remem-

The Amazing Inheritance

bered, and he had run to pick it up and had found the purse.

"A girl got out of the car. I supposed it belonged to her. But when I rang the bell, nobody came to the door. The car had gone away, so I put the bag in my pocket. Whose is it, Mr. Deakin, do you know?"

"Neddie Black!" exclaimed Charlie, his voice shaking with excitement. "You go and sit on that curb!" he pointed to the curb in front of the red brick house. "And if any one comes out of that house, you yell as if you were being killed. I have to telephone!" He looked wildly about for a telephone.

"What is it, Mr. Deakin?" begged Neddie, pulling his sleeve. "What is it?" He knew it was something, because Mr. Deakin was so excited and so breathless. He felt a little tingle of excitement himself.

"It means we have a clue to Queen Teresa!" declared Charlie triumphantly. "I'll go in here and telephone, and if you see any one come out of that house, you yell. Gee whizz! Wouldn't it be great if we were to find the Queen! Just suppose she is in the house now!" He stared at the house. "I believe I'll ring the bell and see!"

"Nobody answers the bell!" Neddie told him. "I rang and rang and nobody came. I'll sit here, Mr. Deakin, and play ball while you telephone,

The Amazing Inheritance

and if anybody comes out, I'll yell like sixty. You go and telephone!"

"Well—" Charlie hesitated. He hated to turn his back on the red brick house for fear some one would come out, but he really could do nothing alone. He was not even sure that the little bag belonged to the queen, although he thought it did. The memorandum which mentioned insect powder, Ka-kee-ta, and cocoanut oil should be proof enough for anybody. No one but Queen Teresa would be buying cocoanut oil for Ka-kee-ta. Of course, the bag belonged to the Queen! And Neddie had found it in front of that house, and so the Queen must be in the house. He would telephone to Joe, and when Joe came with the police, he would go with them and find the Queen. And while he telephoned, the Boy Scout would be on guard.

"Keep your eyes and ears open, Neddie," he cautioned as he turned toward the house on his left. "Don't let anything get by you!"

"You bet!" promised Neddie confidently. He threw his ball into the air and caught it, and then bounced it up and down until it led him in front of the red brick house. "I'll keep my eyes and ears wide open," he told himself proudly. "I bet it'll be a good deed if I find a Queen!"

XXI

TESSIE had been thrust into the darkened room with such force that she staggered and would have fallen if her hand had not touched the twisted spindles of an old bed. She clutched the footboard and clung to it, trembling and breathless.

"All you have to do is to give up your rights to the Sunshine Islands and the Tear of God," called Mr. Pracht from the hall. "Just pound on the door when you've made up your mind, and I'll let you out."

But Tessie said never a word. She just clutched the twisted spindles harder. When she heard Mr. Pracht turn the key in the lock and go down the stairs, she screamed. The cry was involuntary and quickly smothered by her hand, for Tessie remembered that the Gilfoolys were afraid of nothing. Granny had said so. But Tessie was quiveringly afraid that Granny was wrong, for Tessie could have put her finger on a Gilfooly who was afraid—shiveringly afraid—of the darkened room and of white-headed Frederic Pracht, who was on the other side of the door.

What would he do to her if she refused to give up her islands and the Tear of God? Of course she would refuse, for in her veins was that warm

The Amazing Inheritance

quick blood of the Gilfoolys, which had kept her Uncle Pete on the throne of the Sunshine Islands for almost twenty years. No matter what Mr. Pracht and the Sons of Sunshine did to her, Tessie vowed she would not give up her islands nor the Tear of God. They were hers and a Gilfooly kept what was his.

But it was a fearsome task to be a queen and a Gilfooly, as she stood there in the darkened room. Her lip quivered, and her breath came in quick sobbing gasps. What a fool she had been to allow the Sons of Sunshine to kidnap her! She knew better than to get in cars driven by strange chauffeurs. But the car she had entered had been the Kingley car! She never would have taken a strange car. And Mr. Kingley had nothing to do with the Sons of Sunshine. It was ridiculous to think even for a moment that he had. She trusted him implicitly. He had been so kind and helpful, and Mr. Pracht had been anything but kind and helpful. She was afraid of Mr. Pracht, afraid of his hard little eyes, and the cruel twist of his mouth and his cold, contemptuous voice. She was afraid of him, or she would have been afraid of him if she hadn't been a Gilfooly.

And she hated him! If she only could wake up and find that this was all a dream, that she was not a queen, that she never had been a queen, and that she was only a salesgirl in the Evergreen again. She shivered as she thought longingly of

The Amazing Inheritance

that safe nook behind the aluminum in the basement of the Evergreen. Joe Cary had told her that queens had their troubles, but she had laughed at him. She had preferred to listen to Mr. Bill, who told her how beautiful and sweet queens were, and how much to be envied. He would find her, of course. Mr. Bill would be sure to find her. As soon as he heard that she had not returned to the hotel, he would take his hat and find her. Mr. Bill was so strong and so brave. She felt stronger and braver herself as she remembered how strong and brave Mr. Bill was. She released the spindles and walked around to sit on the side of the bed and look about the room.

It was big and square and dark. Funny there was no window. Here was the bed, and over there against the wall was an old washstand and a huge wardrobe, and against the other wall was an old-fashioned bureau. In the fourth wall was the door by which she had entered, and above it was the transom, which allowed a little light to filter into the room. Tessie looked at that transom. Of course she could push the washstand to the door and climb up and slip through the transom, but Mr. Pracht would catch her before she had dropped down on the other side. The transom, encouraging as it looked, was of absolutely no use as a means of escape unless Mr. Pracht left the house, and Tessie did not think he would do that. Perhaps in the middle of the night if she

The Amazing Inheritance

thought that Mr. Pracht would be asleep— But then there might be one of the Sons of Sunshine on guard! Tessie did not believe for a second that a savage, even a cannibal Sunshine Son, would ever really hurt her, but she did think that he might do something very unpleasant, and she wanted to avoid him as long as possible.

She had meant to be such a good queen, she thought with a little choking hiccup. It wasn't fair for the Sons of Sunshine to object to her before they knew what kind of a queen she would make! She meant to be simple and honest, to follow Madame Cabot's rule for queens, to be a good queen and now—. She bit her lip and pressed her hand hard against her eyes to keep back the tears. It wasn't fair!

It was funny that there was no window in such a big room. How could any one see to do her hair at that old bureau? There was a gas jet beside the bureau, but Tessie could not find any matches. It was funny that there was no window. And how old-fashioned the house was to have gas instead of electricity.

From the street, in the rear of the house, she could hear the faint rumble and squeak of a street car as it passed, and it made her realize how unbelievable the situation was. The air was close and heavy. How could any one stay in a close, airless room? She would suffocate. Was that why Mr. Pracht had locked her in the windowless room, so

The Amazing Inheritance

that she would suffocate, and the Sons of Sunshine could do as they pleased with her islands? Well, she would show him! She wouldn't suffocate! She just would not suffocate and let Mr. Pracht sell her islands to the Japanese. She wouldn't do it! But it was funny there wasn't a window.

She jumped up suddenly and crossed the room to peer behind the shabby bureau. It stood close against the wall, and she pulled at it impatiently. There was a squeak. It sounded like the very crack of doom to Tessie's frightened ears. She held her breath as she waited for Mr. Pracht to burst in and ask what she thought she was doing. But when there was no sign from Mr. Pracht, she pulled at the bureau again, waiting until the passing street car made a noise outside which might cover the noise on the inside. At last she had the bureau far enough from the wall to look behind it. Of course there was a window. She looked at it triumphantly.

"I thought so!" she said, as she dusted her hands and pushed herself behind the bureau, so that she could look out of the grimy glass into the dusky twilight.

Below the window was the roof of a small porch and beyond that was a yard inclosed with a high board fence. If she could open the window, drop on the porch, then to the ground and climb the fence, she could escape from Mr. Pracht and the Sons of Sunshine, and then— She was almost

The Amazing Inheritance

sorry that she would still be a queen even if she did escape from Mr. Pracht. She thought again almost regretfully of her old place at the Evergreen. No one had ever kidnaped her or threatened her when she was selling aluminum. She had been scolded, but every one said Mr. Walker's bark was far worse than his bite.

If she could only open this grimy window. The frame stuck tight. She tried again, tugging at it with all of her might, and when she failed to move it the tears rushed to her eyes. It was so tantalizing to see a way of escape and not be able to use it. She pushed and tugged until at last the frame shot up with an unexpectedness which almost threw her out of the window. She drew in a deep breath of the fresh evening air, and felt ready for anything. There really was nothing like fresh air to give a girl courage.

She looked down on the roof of the little porch. It seemed farther away than it had when the window was closed. For all she knew Mr. Pracht might be standing under it to catch her when she slipped down, but there was an equal chance that he wasn't there, and she would have to take the chance. She took time to bless Joe Cary and thank him before she put her feet over the sill. If it hadn't been for Joe she never in the world would have gone to the Y. W. C. A. gymnasium class and trained her muscles to do what they were told. She clung to the sill for a breathless second

The Amazing Inheritance

and then dropped. The silk belt of her frock caught on a nail, but the weight of her body tore it loose. The porch roof creaked when she struck it, but the noise was no louder, loud as it sounded in Tessie's anxious ears, than would have been made by a marauding cat.

Tessie crouched low and waited. There was not another sound. So Mr. Pracht was not on the porch, and he had not heard her. She slid quickly down a post and dashed across the yard like a shadow. Her trained muscles made easy work of the high board fence, and in a flash she was on the other side, in a narrow street, and free. She straightened herself and drew a long breath. It was unbelievable that she had escaped so easily. But she had escaped. She grinned triumphantly. She had skinned her elbows and scratched her face, but such minor casualties were of no account. She felt for the Tear of God. It was safe in the bag hanging from her waist. Suddenly she stopped grinning triumphantly, and began to cry. Now that she was free, she could realize how frightened she had been, even if she was a fearless Gilfooly.

What should she do? Where should she go? Not back to the hotel. The Sons of Sunshine would look for her there and would kidnap her again. And she had had enough of kidnaping. A little of that sort of thing was far more than enough. Where could she go and hide herself

The Amazing Inheritance

from Mr. Pracht until Mr. Marvin would make it safe for her to be found? She fumbled in her pocket for a handkerchief to dry her tears. This was no time to cry. There was a little purse in her pocket as well as a handkerchief, a gay little affair of red leather, and in it was a key. Tessie usually carried the little purse in her beaded bag, but her beaded bag had been so full that morning that she had taken it out and stuffed it into her pocket.

She looked at it now with a little gasp. She had carried the key in that little purse just—well, just because! She had never expected to use it again but now—

The key reminded her of Granny. What would Granny think? She must find some way to let Granny know that she was safe. Oh, wasn't it awful to think how helpless and unfortunate a queen could be! Here she was a fugitive and penniless in the streets of Waloo. And only yesterday she had been riding the streets of Waloo in her own car, and with her own chauffeur and her own bodyguard, and with a purse full of money. Could you believe that twenty-four hours would make such a change? She did not remember where she had dropped her bag. Perhaps Mr. Pracht had it. When she became a queen, she had thought that she had said good-by to Trouble and Care, and here were Trouble and Care at her very elbow. Joe Cary had said they would be

The Amazing Inheritance

there. He had declared she would find that being a queen wouldn't be all fun. And she had laughed at him! Mr. Bill had laughed, too. Mr. Bill had called Joe an old grouch—a croaking old grouch. Mr. Bill was so wonderful! But Joe Cary was right. It wasn't all fun to be a queen. There were many disagreeable moments. She shivered as she recalled some of the disagreeable moments. But at least she had learned one thing. A queen would have to take care of herself just as any girl did, even a salesgirl at the Evergreen. A queen couldn't depend entirely on her body-guard. She wondered if Ka-kee-ta were in the house with Mr. Pracht, or if the frizzled head she had seen belonged to a savage Son of Sunshine.

She was tired—more tired than she had ever been in her life. The big anniversary sale at the Evergreen had not left her as tired as she was now. And she was hungry. What wouldn't she give for some of Granny's liver and onions and a big cup of Granny's hot coffee. And after she had eaten the liver and onions, she would like to tumble into bed and sleep forever. She would, too, after she had sent word to Granny that she was safe. She would telephone, and then she remembered that she had no money, not even a nickel, to pay the telephone charges. There was nothing in the gay red purse but the old key. She couldn't telephone! She couldn't even ride in the

The Amazing Inheritance

street car! She would have to walk. In the old days when she was just a clerk, she had never been without at least carfare, but now that she was a queen she was penniless. Could you believe it? Oh, Joe Cary was right! It wasn't all fun to be a queen!

The tears rushed to her eyes again as she went slowly around the corner. She didn't care if she was a queen, she said with a sob, she was the most miserable girl in Waloo. Where would she be safe now?

XXII

JOE took matters into his own hands at the Waloo. He sent peremptory orders over the telephone, and received unsatisfactory reports from the policemen, who were scouring the city for the Queen of the Sunshine Islands. Granny fluttered helplessly about, blaming herself for ever letting Tessie be a queen, and scolding Johnny, when he told her to stop worrying and leave Tessie to the Boy Scouts. They would find Tessie.

Granny pushed Johnny aside and fluttered over to Joe to ask him if it wasn't time to hear something from Mr. Bill, who was driving frantically here and there, following up every clue. The Kingley limousine had been abandoned in Southeast Waloo, but it could not tell where it had been, and so did not furnish any help at all.

Norah Lee tried to soothe Granny, to tell her that Tessie was all right. Of course she was all right! Nothing could happen to Tessie in Waloo in broad daylight! But Norah's heart did not feel half so hopeful as her lips sounded. Norah read the daily papers, and she knew that many things can happen to a pretty girl in a big city in broad daylight. But she kept on patting Granny's arm encouragingly, and told her again that Tessie

The Amazing Inheritance

was all right. It was the only thing Norah could do.

"It doesn't seem possible that a good little girl like Tessie could disappear without some one seeing her," moaned Granny. The almost continuous whirl of the telephone made her so nervous that she jumped now, when it rang louder than before. She ran over to stand by Joe when he answered the call.

"A Boy Scout master is coming up!" Joe turned to Granny, and there was a flicker of hope in his face. "He thinks he has a clue!"

"What did I tell you?" crowed Johnny, dancing up and down triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you the Scouts would help? If you'd let me look I bet I'd have found her long ago!"

"Don't bother me now, Johnny!" Granny brushed him aside as he danced up to her, and went to stand at the door beside Joe and Norah Lee.

Mr. Bill came in, tired and discouraged, for his frantic driving had produced no results. Close on his heels was Charlie Deakin, who showed Granny the beaded bag and told her where Neddie Blake had found it.

"I tried to tell you on the 'phone," Charlie said. "But your line was so busy that I got an officer to watch the house and came right down. I thought it would be quicker when your line was so busy."

The Amazing Inheritance

Mr. Bill had jumped to his tired feet, and he grasped Charlie by the shoulder.

"Come and show me that house!" he ordered. "My car is outside!" And he pulled Charlie to the door.

"Hold on, Bill! I'm coming, too!" called Joe.

"I'm going!" exclaimed Johnny, dashing after them. "Tessie's my sister, and I'm going!"

Granny caught his arm. "No, you can't go, Johnny Gilfooly! You got to stay here with me! I've got to have something left!" And then she changed her mind and went thudding down the corridor, Johnny's hot little hand clasped tight. She was in the car before Mr. Bill, Johnny close beside her.

"You can't go, Granny!" frowned Joe.

"I shall go!" Granny's voice was quite as determined as Joe's. They seemed to be made from the same piece of adamant. "I guess Tessie is my own granddaughter! I have a right to go. And Johnny's Tessie own brother! I guess he has a right to go, too. Tessie'll want to see us!"

Joe did not waste any time debating the question, but jumped in beside Mr. Bill. Norah Lee had run to them, and was sitting beside Granny, holding Granny's hand. Charlie Deakin squeezed in between Mr. Bill and Joe and told Mr. Bill where to go. Mr. Bill forgot there were any speed laws or any traffic laws in Waloo as he sent his car forward. Granny gasped for breath. She

The Amazing Inheritance

declared they were in Northeast Waloo before they left the hotel.

"Stop at the corner, Bill," suggested Joe, as they drew near the red brick house, before which a curious policeman was sauntering, and Neddie Black was still playing ball. "We don't want them to know we're coming."

"I was going to!" muttered Mr. Bill indignantly. Joe should credit him with a little sense.

"You'll stay here, Granny!" hissed Joe, as he jumped from the car. "And Johnny, you mind your grandmother and don't make any more trouble for us. Come on, Bill!"

"I'll go with you," offered Charlie Deakin, his teeth chattering in his excitement.

"I—" began Johnny, but Joe turned to him fiercely.

"You shut up!" he said so sharply that Johnny did not dare to say another word.

"There's a policeman!" Granny told them in a hoarse whisper, and her gnarled finger pointed tremblingly to the officer. "I suppose you'll let him go with you," she added with much scorn. She was shivering with excitement and fear.

Accompanied by the officer, Joe and Mr. Bill went up the steps. Mr. Bill rang the bell, and when no one answered it, Joe tried to open the door. Mr. Bill kept his finger on the bell. Granny shivered at its shrill peal. But there was no response to it. Joe and Mr. Bill and the officer

The Amazing Inheritance

tried to break in the door, but its fibers and hinges were stronger than their muscles. Mr. Bill tried a window, and when he could not open it he shattered the glass with one blow of his hand. Granny and Norah and Johnny heard the clatter. They caught each other's hands. And still there was not a sound in the house.

"She can't be here!" Joe said hopelessly. "There isn't any one here!"

"We must make sure!" exclaimed Mr. Bill between his teeth, and he climbed through the window.

In a moment he had the door open, and Joe and the officer were clattering in. It was not worth while now to be quiet. The officer's flashlight showed them only empty rooms. Joe lighted matches and threw them aside as they flared out. He led the way through the lower floor.

"Some one has been here!" He pointed to a heap of cigar ashes beside a big chair.

"And here for some time if he smoked cigars enough to make that much ash," added the officer wisely.

"Come upstairs," begged Mr. Bill. "Never mind the ashes now!"

At last they reached the room in which Tessie had been locked. They were able to break in the door and the flashlight, the flaring matches showed them the bed, the old wardrobe and the bureau,

The Amazing Inheritance

which had been pulled from the wall. Mr. Bill ran to look behind it.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed when he saw the open window. "Great Scott!" he cried again when he saw a piece of blue crepe caught on a nail in the sill. It was from a woman's frock, and Mr. Bill stared at it. Tessie had been wearing a blue crepe when she disappeared. "She's been here!" he shouted to Joe, although he had no way of proving that the bit of blue crepe had ever been a part of Tessie's frock.

"And she got away!" Joe read the story of the open window, as he looked out and saw the roof of the porch below it. "She got out this way!" He dropped from the window, as Tessie had dropped, struck the porch roof, and slid down the post to look carefully over the yard. "Tess!" he called softly. "Tess! It's Joe Cary! She isn't here," he looked back to tell Mr. Bill. "But she must have got away all right!" He went around to join the others at the front door.

Another man joined them also, the irate owner of the red brick house, who wanted to know what the dickens they were doing breaking into his place and making such a commotion?

"Who lived here?" demanded Mr. Bill before he answered one of the questions.

"I rented it day before yesterday to a man by the name of Smith," returned the owner, who never would have answered Mr. Bill if he had

The Amazing Inheritance

not been accompanied by a policeman. "A fat, white-headed fellow who wanted a quiet place for his sister. She had been at a sanitarium," and the owner touched his head significantly. He was the most surprised landlord in Waloo when he was told that the Queen of the Sunshine Islands must have been a prisoner in his house, and he exclaimed quickly that he knew nothing about any Frederic Pracht. He had rented the house to a man who had said his name was Smith—John Smith. He had taken it for an indefinite period and paid a month's rent. The house was furnished, so the new tenant had only to bring his personal baggage. John Smith had seemed like a pleasant, honest man, and had talked in a nice way about his sister.

"And all the time he must have meant the Queen," he said, as if he could not believe the story Joe and Mr. Bill told him. "Sure, I read about her in the papers! She used to work in the Evergreen. My niece, Susie Blakeley, works there, too. She was all excited when they found a queen in the store. I wonder what she will say to this!" He took the money Mr. Bill offered him to repair the broken window, and said again it was all right, and he was glad they hadn't found anything worse than they had. He stared at his old house with dazed eyes. "Well, can you believe it," he murmured as they drove away and left him with Charlie Deakin and Ned-

The Amazing Inheritance

die Black, who were more disappointed than they could ever say.

"What's the matter? Isn't Tessie there?" called Granny impatiently. She jumped out and ran heavily toward them. She could not wait in the car another second. "Where's Tessie?" she demanded.

"She got away!" explained Joe. "She got away from Pracht!"

"She did? Then why don't we go right back to the hotel and ask her where she's been?" Granny scuttled to the car. That was the sensible thing to do, not stand here and talk indefinitely. "Why are you waiting here when Tessie's gone home?"

"Why, indeed?" They tumbled into the car, and Mr. Bill drove back to the Waloo as he had driven away from it, without any regard for traffic laws or speed laws. They hurried into the hotel and up in the elevator, chattering excitedly. They ran along the corridor and into the royal suite.

"Tessie, you bad girl!" began Granny at the door. But she did not sound as if Tessie really had been a bad girl—she sounded loving and excited. When she ran into the room she stopped. "She isn't here!" she exclaimed, frightened because Tessie was not there. "She isn't here!"

"She must be!" declared Mr. Bill, and he ran through the other rooms. But Tessie was not in one of them. Mr. Bill's eager face fell. He

The Amazing Inheritance

had been so sure that Tessie would be there that he felt bewildered and indignant as well as frightened.

"Perhaps she hasn't had time to get here," suggested Joe forlornly, although he knew that Tessie had had plenty of time. All she had to do was to jump on a car, and she would be at the hotel in twenty minutes. They had taken more than twenty minutes to search the house and drive back. He called up the hotel office to learn if any one had seen Tessie. No one had. He turned to Mr. Bill with a questioning stare. Where was Tessie Gilfooly?

Mr. Bill shook his head. He wished he knew. And then he shook his broad shoulders and stared at Joe. "I'll find her!" he declared fiercely, with a confidence which was based on nothing sounder than desire.

"I'll find her!" contradicted Joe as fiercely.

"Deary me, where can she be?" wailed Granny. "It isn't like the Gilfoolys to go away like this! It never was like one of them but Pete! I wish Tessie had never heard of this queen business!"

"So do I!" fervently agreed Joe. He looked at Mr. Bill, as if in some way he blamed him!

Mr. Bill said never a word, but he did flush quickly. Deep in his heart, he did not wish that Tessie had never heard of the queen business. Although Tessie had been kidnaped and might be in danger he did not wish that, for if Tessie had

The Amazing Inheritance

never been a queen, there was every chance that Mr. Bill would never have known her. When she was selling aluminum, she was just one of the hundreds of girls who poured into the Evergreen every morning and out of the Evergreen every evening. She was lost among the hundreds. But when Fate plucked her out of the industrial army, and showed her to Mr. Bill as a queen, he saw that she was fair and sweet and dear—how dear Mr. Bill had not quite realized until now. It made him furious to think of it now. You bet, he would find her!

"You go to bed, Granny, you and Johnny," suggested Joe. "We'll call you the minute we hear anything. You go to bed. You're dead tired!"

Granny was tired, but she could not go to sleep until she knew where Tessie was. She allowed Norah to lead her to her room and tuck her into the bed. She was too tired to resist. She was an old woman, she told Norah pitifully, and had lost her husband and seven children, but never in all of her life had she had to go through anything like this. Why couldn't she have been kidnaped instead of Tessie?

Norah patted her wrinkled hand and crooned; "Poor Granny!" until Granny did fall into a troubled sleep.

Johnny refused to go to bed, but consented to lie on the davenport. His head had scarcely touched the pillow before he was asleep, too. Joe

The Amazing Inheritance

tramped up and down the room, while Mr. Bill slumped in a chair, his head in his hands. As Norah came out of the bedroom, the telephone rang and she caught the receiver. The two men jumped beside her.

"It's your mother." She nodded to Mr. Bill. "No, no news," she said through the transmitter. "Yes, we are all terribly anxious. We will let you know when we hear anything," she promised, for Mrs. Kingley had told her that she could not sleep unless she knew the little queen was safe.

"We were so fond of her, she was so pretty and simple and honest. I don't know any girl now who is so unaffected. You couldn't help but be fond of her. It doesn't seem possible that any one could carry her off in Waloo, does it? And in our car! It makes me frantic! I can't think what the police are doing. Mr. Kingley is frantic, too!"

"I should think he would be," Joe said dryly, when Norah had told them what Mrs. Kingley had said.

Mr. Bill dropped back in his big chair with a groan, but in a flash, he jumped up and went out. Norah's eyes followed him.

"He's worried," she told Joe.

"We're all worried!"

"I know. I'm so—so sorry for you!" She

The Amazing Inheritance

just touched Joe's sleeve to let him know how sorry she was.

He looked up suddenly. How sympathetic she was! What a good friend she had been to Tessie. There was no one quite like Norah Lee. His heart thumped a bit as he thought how unusual Norah Lee was.

"You go to bed, too!" he insisted huskily. "I'll call you the minute we hear anything. But if you don't get some sleep you won't be much help to-morrow. I'll just stay here beside the telephone. We may hear something. We must hear something!" he insisted, because he so desperately wished to hear something. "But I shan't let you stay up any longer. You're all tired out!"

She hesitated as if she were going to insist on staying with him, and then she said good night softly and went away. Joe's eyes followed her until she was out of sight. What a splendid girl she was, he thought, as he tramped up and down the room before he threw himself into a chair beside the telephone. He had always known she was splendid. And what a good friend she was to Tessie! How different they were! Norah was the kind of a girl a man would have to reach up to. He would always have to be right on his toes, for she would be a little ahead—always. While Tessie—a man would have to put back his hand and pull Tessie up to him. Tessie was all

The Amazing Inheritance

sweetness and tenderness. She made a man contented and happy while Norah—Norah—

Joe's heart gave a sudden leap which almost choked him. He jumped to his feet and looked about him bewildered. "Gosh!" he exclaimed, puzzled at this emotion which had gripped him so suddenly. He tramped up and down the room again. "Norah!" The name made him tingle. "Norah!" He dropped weakly into a chair and put his hand to his forehead. What on earth was the matter with him? Why should he feel smothered and limp and exhilarated when he thought of Norah Lee? He did not understand why, but he discovered that when he thought of Norah, he forgot Tessie. But he must not forget Tessie—Tessie was lost. It must be because he was so tired. Lord, how tired he was! He slouched down in his chair and relaxed his tired muscles. Tessie—Norah— The lids dropped over his weary eyes, and he began to dream—strange, sweet, new dreams.

Downstairs, Mr. Bill had settled himself in a chair beside the telephone switchboard and lighted a cigarette.

"Give me any message about Queen Teresa," he told the telephone girl.

"Ain't it awful about her?" she shuddered. "I used to wish I could change places with her, when I'd see her go in and out with that black fellow

The Amazing Inheritance

with his ax, but now— Say, where do you suppose she is?"

"I wish you would tell me," Mr. Bill said wearily. "Don't forget to give me any message that comes in. Everybody upstairs is asleep, and I don't want them disturbed."

"The old lady ought to get a good night's rest," agreed the telephone girl. "You just shut your own eyes, and I'll call you the first thing."

Mr. Bill could close his eyes, but he could not sleep. He smoked cigarette after cigarette, and listened unconsciously to the uninterrupted chatter of the girl who had envied Tessie until Tessie had been kidnaped. When the telephone operator went off duty, and the switchboard was turned over to the night clerk, Mr. Bill went over to police headquarters, where there was no news at all.

"We have all our men out, Mr. Kingley," the sergeant told him. "Even the chief's working on the case. We're trying to round up that Pracht—Smith, he called himself, didn't he?—and make him confess. But we don't know anything about those Sons of Sunshine. They sound like anarchists or Black Hands to me. But we oughta hear something pretty soon."

The minutes dragged into hours and there was no news. Mr. Bill dropped into a troubled doze and woke to find himself in another day. He went drearily back to the hotel. Joe was furious

The Amazing Inheritance

because he had fallen asleep over his strange new dreams. Granny, with a face that was gray and worried, instead of happy and rosy, was talking to him and to Norah Lee. The Boy Scout was splashing in the bathroom.

"You heard anything?" demanded Granny as Mr. Bill entered.

Before he could answer, the telephone rang sharply. Joe and Mr. Bill dashed to answer it, but Joe caught the receiver. He pushed Mr. Bill away.

"Yes," he said impatiently through the transmitter. He waved his hand to them. "It's Tess!" he cried chokingly. "Yes, Tessie! Where are you?" He listened eagerly. "Where are you?" he demanded fiercely. "Where—" He shook the instrument and turned to them in exasperation. "Isn't that the limit? Central broke the connection before Tessie could tell me where she was."

"What did she say?" demanded Mr. Bill.

"She said she was all right, and that Granny wasn't to worry. She isn't coming back for a while. She's going to hide until Pitts comes and straightens everything out. She said Granny wasn't to worry, nobody was to worry." But Joe looked worried. "Do you suppose she did get away?" he asked Mr. Bill. "Is this message a plan to call off the police?"

Mr. Bill had taken the receiver from Joe and

The Amazing Inheritance

was calling Central and ordering her for heaven's sake to get a move on and trace the call she had just given them. Several days later, it seemed to all of them, Central reported that the call had come from a pay station. Hadn't they heard the nickel drop? Central couldn't say which pay station. She would try and find out if they wanted her to, she added obligingly.

"You'd better!" advised Mr. Bill. "And immediately!" He swung around and faced the others. "We know she's alive and well. That's something! Did she talk as if she were frightened?"

"No," remembered Joe. "She said she would have called before but she fell asleep. She said she was awfully tired."

"She wouldn't have fallen asleep if she had been frightened," Norah said with a wise nod of her head.

Granny contradicted her flatly. "I went to sleep and I was frightened," she said with a deep, deep sigh. "I never was more frightened in my life. I don't think I can wait until this Pitts comes. I've got to find Tessie right away and see for myself if she's all right."

"We'll find her," promised Joe, as he had promised a hundred times since Tessie had disappeared. "And we know she's all right. She'll call us again soon. Sure she will! She's still a little afraid. She'll call us again," he repeated.

Granny whimpered softly. It was such a re-

The Amazing Inheritance

lief to hear from Tessie. "I'm not going to wait here!" she said with a sudden determination. "I don't like it here without Tessie. I don't feel I have any right here without her. I'm not the queen. I'm going home with Johnny and wait for Tessie there!" She had a quick dislike to the luxury of the hotel. She wanted her little cottage where there was work for her to do while she waited, and where she had always had Tessie.

"Tessie won't like that," objected Joe.

"I don't care! I shan't stay here without her!"

"Let her go," whispered Norah. "It will be better for her to be where she can be busy. She has nothing to do here but think."

Norah helped Granny pack a bag, and Mr. Bill drove them to the cottage. They were very quiet, and Mr. Bill remembered the traffic laws and did not dash up the street as he had the night before. They were very quiet when they stopped in front of the shabby little house. Granny murmured a wish that they had never left it as she hurried up the walk and up the steps, but at the door she paused.

"Tessie always had the key," she faltered.

Joe had a key and unlocked the door. When they went in, Granny raised her head. It was as if she sensed a presence. Her nostrils twitched, and her ears strained. She sent a swift glance around the shabby living-room and went on to the kitchen. There was a coffee pot on the stove and

The Amazing Inheritance

an opened package of cereal on the table while in the sink was a cup and saucer and a bowl.

"Tessie's been here!" cried Granny, and she sat down suddenly on a chair. "She's been here! Thank heaven I didn't give away that coffee and breakfast food when we left. Even if we were queens I kept it. Tessie came here when she ran away from that wicked man." She waved her hand to show them her proof.

"Well I'll be darned!" muttered Mr. Bill, and he sat down suddenly on the kitchen table.

"Why the dickens didn't I come home last night?" demanded Joe in disgust. "If I had come home I would have found her."

"Perhaps she's upstairs asleep?" suggested Norah. "She said she was tired."

They trooped up the narrow stairs—Granny first. It was Granny who went into the bedroom alone, and at her disappointed exclamation the others ran in, although Granny's disappointed exclamation had told them that Tessie was not there.

"She's gone!" wailed Granny. "She's gone! And look!" She pointed to Tessie's royal raiment on a chair. "She took off her queen clothes!" She pulled the closet door open, and searched among the shabby dresses which had belonged to Tessie Gilfooly. There was something pathetic and ghostlike about the little frocks. Mr. Bill tenderly stroked a sleeve. "She's taken her old

The Amazing Inheritance

black sateen," announced Granny from the closet. "The dress she used to wear to the store. She's left her queen clothes and gone off in her old working clothes! Can you believe it? Deary me!" She sat down on the bed and looked from one to the other. "I'd like to know what it all means?" she said helplessly.

"I bet I know!" Mr. Bill's downcast face had been growing brighter and brighter. If Mr. Bill had been a barometer you would have seen at a glance that he promised fair weather. "I bet I know the hunch that made her change her clothes! You just wait, Granny! I'll find her now!"

"Just a minute!" Joe put a forceful hand on Mr. Bill's arm as he would have dashed away. "Tessie's safe now. We know that if we don't know where she is. But before you follow your hunch you'll take me to your father!"

"Father!" Mr. Bill stared at Joe. Had Joe lost his mind? "Sure," he said soothingly. "That's on my way. Come on!"

XXIII

MR. BILL, with Joe Cary at his heels, dashed into the Evergreen and through the crowd of shoppers to the elevator. A car was just about to go up. Mr. Bill reached in and plucked out one of the passengers.

"Larsen," he said breathlessly to the employment manager, "have you taken on any new people to-day?"

"Wha—what?" spluttered Larsen, too startled at being plucked from the ascending elevator to do more than splutter—"what do you mean?"

"Just what I say!" exclaimed Mr. Bill. "Have you taken on any new people to-day? Hurry up the answer! I haven't any time to spare."

His eagerness and his determination impressed Larsen as soon as Larsen could recover from his surprise. "Yes," he said then, "I took on three new people."

Mr. Bill sent a triumphant glance at Joe Cary. "Any girls?" he demanded even more eagerly.

Larsen regarded him curiously. Mr. Bill had never showed any interest in the girls employed in the Evergreen, they had never seemed to be any more to Mr. Bill than so many bolts of midnight blue serge, or so many electric washing-machines, but now Mr. Bill acted as if he knew that the

The Amazing Inheritance

girls were human beings, real flesh-and-blood little creatures. "There was one girl," Larsen remembered slowly.

Mr. Bill caught his shoulder and gave him a little shake. "What was she like? Where is she?" The words fairly dashed over each other in their haste to be spoken. "What was she like?" he repeated impatiently.

"Nothing!" Larsen described the new sales-girl in one vivid word. "She wasn't like anything! And she's down in the basement in the hardware. Her name?" in answer to another shake from Mr. Bill. "Her name was Mary Smith." And to the best of Larsen's recollection she was nineteen years old, a high-school girl, an orphan, and she had wanted to go to work at once. Mr. Walker was short-handed so he had taken her down at once, and she would receive the minimum wage of——

But Mr. Bill did not wait to hear about the minimum wage. "Come on, Joe!" he called over his shoulder and hurried away, not to his father's office where Joe thought they were bound, but to the basement.

The elevator was full of shoppers and Mr. Bill was separated from Joe by a blue serge suit and a plaid gingham frock, so that Joe could not ask Mr. Bill what on earth was eating him, but an inkling of Mr. Bill's suspicion had crept into his

The Amazing Inheritance

mind. He was as eager as Mr. Bill to learn if there was anything in that suspicion.

When they reached the basement, Mr. Bill made a dash for the hardware and stood for a moment surveying the department with eager searching eyes. Half a dozen customers were hesitating over various pans and kettles, and as many clerks were waiting, with more or less patience, for them to make their decisions. Mr. Bill and Joe had never seen those customers before but they had seen the clerks. They recognized each one of the half dozen. But Larsen had said there was a new girl. Joe turned to ask Mr. Walker where she was when Mr. Bill pulled his sleeve, and pointed a shaking finger toward the corner where the brooms and mops were. A girl was standing beside them, the brooms concealing fully half of her black frock.

"There she is!" hissed Mr. Bill.

Joe swung around and stared. There she was, the Mary Smith Mr. Larsen had mentioned, the new employee. She was small and dressed in black in accordance with the rule of the store. Her hair was pulled back from her forehead and twisted in a hard knot on her neck. She wore glasses, and so far as Joe could tell, she did not look like any one he had ever seen before.

"Huh!" muttered Mr. Bill in deep disgust. "Larsen was right. She does look like nothing, doesn't she? My hunch wasn't worth much, but

The Amazing Inheritance

just to make sure let's have a word with old Walker."

When they found Mr. Walker in the rear of the department, he agreed that Mary Smith had no style, that she would never be noticed in a crowd, but he insisted that as a salesgirl she already showed promise.

"Only have to tell her once," he declared. "And brains are of more use than style in this department. I think she'll make good!" As if Mr. Bill cared what she would make. "But since I made such a bad guess about little Miss Gilfooly I haven't had as much confidence in my psychology. I never in the world would have taken her for a queen, so I won't say too much about this Mary Smith. Say," he begged, as Mr. Bill would have darted off, "have they found Miss Gilfooly yet? There's romance! Can you believe it? I declare, I was just about ready to think that there wasn't any in the world when along came that frizzle-headed black man and bang! we were off! It was a good stunt for the department. You'd never believe how our sales jumped. Too bad about the little queen! I hope she's all right!" Tessie would have been surprised to hear how worried he seemed to be about her.

"I hope she is!" agreed Mr. Bill, his eyes following Mary Smith as she moved from the brooms to the carpet-sweepers.

Joe nudged him sharply, and asked him if he

The Amazing Inheritance

were going to his father's office or should Joe go alone?

"It might be just as well for you to come along," he said significantly. "I've several things to say to your father that it might be just as well for you to hear."

"Just as you say!" But Mr. Bill showed no interest in a visit to his father's office, nor in what Joe was going to say to his father. He was as flat as a pricked balloon. A moment before, he had been floating high in the sky, a round rosy ball, and now he lay on the dirty pavement, nothing but a bit of dingy red rubber. He took another look at Mary Smith, but she had disappeared around the carpet-sweepers, and he followed Joe to the elevator and to the office.

Mr. Kingley looked up as they entered. "Huh!" he grunted, and they could regard themselves as welcome or not as they pleased. Joe walked over until he stood in front of the flat desk where Mr. Kingley would have to look at him if he looked at anything.

"Mr. Kingley," he began, but Mr. Kingley preferred to lead the discussion.

"Have you found our queen?" he asked, and there really was an interest, an anxiety, in his voice.

"No, we haven't!" exclaimed Mr. Bill before Joe could gather breath to repeat with crushing sarcasm the phrase "our queen" which so irri-

The Amazing Inheritance

tated him. "Just for a moment, when we were at her old home, I had a hunch that she might be hiding herself from those darned Sunshine Sons and that she would think there would be no place as safe as her old job in the Evergreen basement, but she isn't there."

"My soul!" interrupted Mr. Kingley, and his eyes fairly stood on his cheeks. "Are you sure! That would make a striking story. The little queen driven back to the Evergreen where she was found!" He smacked his lips as he voiced the headline he quickly composed. "Are you sure, Bill?" He hoped that Mr. Bill would not be sure.

"You don't think of anything but headlines, do you, Mr. Kingley?" Joe broke in rudely. "You never think of Tessie as a young girl, a human being? You only think of her as publicity for the Evergreen!"

"Well, but—but—" spluttered Mr. Kingley, staring at Joe indignantly. Didn't Joe know that the welfare department of the Evergreen was the best in the Northwest? That didn't look as if he failed to regard his employees as human beings. As for publicity, even the Kingleys furnished publicity for the Evergreen. Every time Mrs. Kingley went east or Ethel had a friend in for a cup of tea, there was a notice in the *Gazette*. To be sure, the notice did not always mention the Evergreen, but in the Waloo mind, the name of Kingley

The Amazing Inheritance

meant Evergreen. The two were synonymous. Joe should remember that. Really Joe was impossible. He should remember all that Mr. Kingley had done for Tessie since she became a queen, clothed her, introduced her to Waloo and aided her in every way. He had a perfect right to be indignant at Joe and to glare at him hotly.

"What I want to know is, how much the Evergreen is responsible for this kidnaping?" went on Joe, as cold as Mr. Kingley was hot. They might have been the two extremities of a dinner—hot soup and frozen pudding. Joe did not seem to care a pin if Mr. Kingley did sputter and glare at him.

"Joe!" Both Mr. Kingley and Mr. Bill were on their feet and their exclamations were full of genuine and righteous indignation.

"What do you mean?" Mr. Bill found his tongue first. "What do you mean, Cary? What has father to do with the Sons of Sunshine?"

"That's what I want him to tell us," Joe said, while Mr. Kingley continued to imitate a soda-water bottle. "There are things which must be cleared up. I don't know much, but I suspect a lot." He turned his back on the soda-water bottle and spoke directly to Mr. Bill. "You remember the way your father acted when this darned news came to Tessie, how he framed a big publicity campaign for the Evergreen, the exhibition of the clothes he sold Tessie, the aluminum sale

The Amazing Inheritance

for the poor children of the Sunshine Islands, the moving picture he had made of her, oh, the whole business? It was all over the front page of the newspapers every day. And it made the Evergreen famous from New York to San Francisco. People who came to town asked the way to the Evergreen instead of to the Art Museum or the new post office. It put the Evergreen on the world map, and made it the most-talked-of store in the country. No matter what came up, Mr. Kingley considered the Evergreen before he did Tessie. And what I want to know now is how much of the thing is fake and how much is true?"

"And what I want to know now," declared Mr. Bill standing shoulder to shoulder with Joe and facing this choking parent, "is where Tessie Gilfooly is. If half what Joe says is true, then you know where she is, and you've got to tell me!"

Mr. Kingley turned his bulging eyes from one determined young face only to see another determined young face. He could not entrench himself behind glittering generalities another minute. They would know what he knew, and he might as well tell them at once.

"Boys," he began slowly, "sit down and I'll tell you what I know. Sit down!" he roared, as they failed to obey his first order but stood facing him with a watchfulness which was very annoying. "You make me nervous standing there, and looking at me as if I were a criminal. No, Bill," as

The Amazing Inheritance

Mr. Bill impatiently shifted his weight from one brown shoe to the other, "I don't know anything about the kidnaping of Miss Gilfooly! But Joe is right in his statement that I made use of the strange things that have happened here to advertise the Evergreen. I only did what any red-blooded man would have done. It would have been blind stupid folly to have refused to use such material. And a store never had such publicity. Joe is right when he says the Evergreen is the most famous store in the world. People do come from all over the country, and our mail-order business is doubled, trebled, because of the romance we found in our basement."

"Get down to brass tacks, Dad," rudely interrupted Mr. Bill. "Never mind a speech. Just tell us in a few simple words whether you originated the whole stunt? Are there any Sunshine Islands? Did Tessie Gilfooly ever have an Uncle Pete? Did——"

"Bill!" exclaimed Mr. Kingley, looking incurably injured. "How can you think that I would stoop to such unscrupulous methods!"

"But did you?" insisted Mr. Bill. He walked over to stand beside his father as if to remind him that there might be more than one way to obtain a direct answer to a simple question.

Before Mr. Kingley could say whether he did or didn't, Norah Lee burst unceremoniously into the room.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Oh, Mr. Kingley!" she exclaimed quickly. "Ka-kee-ta has come back! He came half an hour ago, and he is perfectly furious because the queen and the Tear of God have disappeared!"

"Ka-kee-ta!" The exclamation was an incredulous trio. The motif was full of unbelief.

"Where has he been?" demanded Joe, one eye on Mr. Kingley and the other on pink-cheeked, breathless Norah. "Where was he?"

"He doesn't seem to know," Norah said. She was eager to tell her story. "He actually says he doesn't know. He went to get the chocolates for Tessie, and when he came back, he had a five-pound box under his arm. But where he was and what he was doing he can't, or won't say! He mumbles a lot of native gibberish, but of course I can't understand that. It's maddening! He declares he will find Tessie before night. And Pracht, too. And he mumbles a lot about sharks!"

"He would!" muttered Joe, a puzzled frown cutting his forehead from his face.

"I hope he does find her!" exclaimed Mr. Bill, staring at his father, who seemed pleased that Ka-kee-ta had returned.

"Of course I'm not worried about Tessie since she telephoned that she was all right," went on Norah. She could feel that there was a tension in the office atmosphere, and as she did not understand it she talked nervously. "I know she is all right, but——"

The Amazing Inheritance

"How do you know she is all right?" burst forth Mr. Bill. "She may have been forced to send that message. You don't know that she is all right at all!" He contradicted Norah flatly and rudely.

Joe looked at him in surprise. "She was all right when she left the cottage," he impatiently reminded Mr. Bill. "She was right enough to eat some breakfast and change her clothes. Of course she is all right, and," he turned his eyes on Mr. Kingley, who squirmed uneasily, "I'm inclined to think that Ka-kee-ta is right, that Tessie will be found before the morning edition of the *Gazette* goes to press. How about it, Mr. Kingley? Do you agree with me?"

"I hope so. I sincerely hope so," stuttered Mr. Kingley, who found it very disagreeable to be singled out as Joe had singled him. "I do hope she will be found long before then."

"Ka-kee-ta's looking for her now," Norah went on. "He didn't wait a second, but went off with the candy under one arm and his ax under the other."

"Mr. Douglas wants to see Mr. Kingley," broke in the office boy from the doorway.

"Douglas?" Mr. Kingley looked as if he had never heard of any Mr. Douglas.

"Bert Douglas from Marvin, Phelps & Stokes," Mr. Bill told him. "Send him in," he said to the boy. "Perhaps he can tell us something."

The Amazing Inheritance

Bert came in with much dignity and importance. He glanced at the little group—Norah and Mr. Bill and Joe—which had formed in front of Mr. Kingley, and he explained at once why he was there.

"Mr. Marvin sent me over to tell you, Mr. Kingley, that the special representative from the Sunshine Islands, Mr. Pitts, has arrived to confer with Queen Teresa. As you have taken the queen under your protection, he thought you should know at once."

There was not a sound, but the air was heavy with significance. They all felt it. Joe Cary stepped forward.

"Then there really are Sunshine Islands?" He sounded as if he had never really believed that there were any Sunshine Islands.

Bert looked at him in surprise. "Of course!" he said. "The special representative is a white man—James Pitts. He has had charge of King Pete's business affairs. He was on the islands when King Pete died, and then, just as he was ready to leave, the radicals, Sons of Sunshine, they call themselves, you know, locked him up. But he had sent Ka-kee-ta with a lot of important papers to a lawyer in Honolulu, and the lawyer brought him here. Pitts managed to escape and has just arrived. We were glad to see him, for we had so many contradictory messages from him and about him, that we scarcely knew what

The Amazing Inheritance

to think. I suppose they were sent by the radicals."

Joe stared at him before he drew a long breath, and turned away. "Mr. Kingley," he said impulsively, "I beg your pardon!"

"I should think you would," Mr. Kingley told him gruffly.

"All we have to do now," went on Bert, still rather overfull of importance, "is to find Queen Teresa, and then we can settle everything up. Mr. Marvin thought perhaps—" He looked suggestively at Mr. Kingley, who hurriedly shook his head and fairly bellowed his reply.

"No, I don't! I don't know where she is! You go right back and tell Mr. Marvin I don't know! This is all very interesting and very romantic, but it doesn't do my work. If there is nothing I can do for you, I would suggest that I have the morning mail to look over. Send in Miss Jenson," he curtly told the boy who ran in to answer his buzzer.

Joe, stalking out behind the others, could not refrain from a last word. He would have choked if he had not spoken. "You mean Mr. Gray, don't you?" He grinned sarcastically. "The *Gazette* should be told of the arrival of James Pitts, special representative of the Sunshine Islands, whose queen was found in the basement of the Evergreen."

The Amazing Inheritance

Mr. Kingley regarded him with cold eyes. "Will you kindly shut the door behind you?" he said so frostily that any thermometer would have registered his temperature as far, far below zero.

XXIV

THEY held a conference in the anteroom, Joe, Mr. Bill, Bert and Norah.

"This Pitts is a real man, is he, Bert?" asked Joe.

"I should say he was! Big as the side of a house and quicker than chain lightning. He knew all about this Pracht brute and understood at once why he stole the Gilfooly marriage record. He says the Sons of Sunshine are only the tools of a syndicate that is trying to get possession of the islands to sell them to Japan, so that Japan can have an aeroplane base near the United States. Sounds like an old-fashioned melodrama, doesn't it? The beautiful heroine and the wicked villain and everything!"

"Everything but the noble hero," sighed Norah. "He should find the queen. Poor little girl! I wonder where she is!"

"Poor Queen Teresa!" They all wondered.

"Say," exclaimed Mr. Bill suddenly. "I'm not satisfied! I'm going back to the aluminum!" And he dashed into a descending elevator.

They were close at his heels, and when they left the cage at the basement, they met Mr. Larsen

The Amazing Inheritance

waiting to go up. He put out his hand and caught Mr. Bill's arm.

"Did you find the girl you were looking for?" he asked quickly. "You were in such a hurry you didn't wait for me to remember that there was another one. I sent her to the crockery!" He nodded toward the crockery which was a neighbor of the hardware. "She was an old girl," he explained, "and that was why——"

But Mr. Bill did not wait to hear "why," he was hurrying to a pile of blue-and-white mixing bowls which half concealed a little clerk in the required black sateen. Her back was toward them, but they could see that her hair was pulled from her forehead into a tight knot at her neck and that she wore big amber goggles. She looked as if she might be a near relative to the Mary Smith they had found in the hardware. Joe Cary shook his head. That girl wasn't Tessie. Here was just another disappointment for Mr. Bill.

"He's only wasting time," Joe grumbled to Norah Lee, for if that girl was Tessie of course Joe would recognize her at once, and Joe could not see that she resembled Tessie in anything but size. Tessie never wore her hair like that. And Tessie did not have amber goggles.

"I beg your pardon," Mr. Bill said breathlessly, when he reached the black sateen back, "but would you be kind enough to remove your glasses?" But before the girl could remove her

The Amazing Inheritance

glasses, before she could do more than swing around and shrink away and blush and stammer, he had her hands in his. "Tessie!" he cried. "Tessie Gilfooly! I knew you were here!" His hands held her fingers tight as he repeated, "I knew you were here!"

"Tessie!" It was plain that Joe had never really thought that she would be there.

"Queen Teresa?" Bert peered over Joe's shoulder and wondered if this odd-looking girl could be pretty Tessie Gilfooly.

"Oh, Tessie Gilfooly!" Norah was as sure as Mr. Bill. "We have been so worried about you!"

"How did you know I was here?" Tessie tore off the disguising glasses and let them see her big blue eyes.

"I knew!" Mr. Bill told her quickly. "I had a hunch you would feel safer in your old job than anywhere else in Waloo. And you disguised yourself as a salesgirl!" He laughed chokingly. "And came back right next to the old job? That's a good one on Walker! He never recognized you?"

"You didn't recognize her at first, either, Mr. Bill," reminded the mortified Mr. Walker, who was hovering near. "And the crockery isn't in my department."

"I knew she was here!" declared Mr. Bill. "But it did take me a minute or two to find her. I never thought she would hide herself behind

The Amazing Inheritance

amber goggles. We hunted for you all night," he told Tessie simply.

Tessie flushed. "I'm sorry," she said just as simply. "I was so scared, and so mad," she explained. And she told them how she had gone to find Ka-kee-ta, and had been locked in an upstairs room in the old brick house. And when she had escaped, owing to Joe's insistence on her regular attendance at the Y. W. C. A. gymnasium classes, she had gone back to the old home and fallen asleep. It was morning when she wakened, and she had changed her clothes, found a nickel in the baking powder can, and telephoned to Granny that she was all right. Then she had gone to the Evergreen. "It was awfully good of Mr. Larsen to take me. I guess he was short-handed. I knew no one would look for me here. And if I pulled my hair back," she put her hand up and pulled her hair looser around her face, "and put on these big amber glasses, I knew no one would recognize me. And no one did!" she finished triumphantly.

"I did!" contradicted Mr. Bill proudly. "I recognized you!"

"I'm glad you did!" Tessie told him softly. "I'm glad you found me!" She felt so safe with Mr. Bill. Mr. Bill would never let any one harm her. She became aware that Mr. Bill was holding tight to her hand, and that the people in the department, customers and clerks, were staring

The Amazing Inheritance

at her. She tried to release her fingers, but Mr. Bill would not let them go.

"What's this? What's this?" Mr. Kingley himself was coming toward them. Customers and clerks fell back to make a gangway. "So Queen Teresa has been found in the Evergreen basement a second time!" He smiled until he saw Joe Cary, when he stopped smiling and looked as foolish and as self-conscious as a fat, bald-headed, elderly man could look.

"A strange coincidence," Joe murmured impudently.

"Your special representative is here, Miss Gilfooly," exclaimed Bert, eager for a portion of the Queen's attention. "Mr. Marvin sent me to tell you. You can learn all about your kingdom now."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Tessie. "I've almost decided I don't want a kingdom! I don't know as I even want to be a queen! It's a lot safer to be a salesgirl!" And she drew a long breath.

"That's the stuff, Tess!" indorsed Joe. "There isn't any place in the world to-day for a queen!"

"Miss Gilfooly has no choice," broke in Mr. Kingley, turning his broad back to Joe. "Her good fortune, as such things always are, is just an accident of birth. And one cannot escape the duties to which one is born. That is true of my son and it is true of Miss Gilfooly. Neither of them can shirk the obligations which Providence

The Amazing Inheritance

has given them. I should suggest," he added hastily, as he became aware of an increasing audience, "that Mr. Douglas take Queen Teresa to see Mr. Pitts, so that our business may be resumed. All of these good people," he smiled benevolently on the good people, who were staring at him open-eyed and open-mouthed, "wish to buy something."

"I'll take her!" Mr. Bill exclaimed jealously, and he still clung to Tessie's little hand.

"We'll all go," suggested Joe. "You come too, Mr. Kingley?" he added with unusual courtesy.

"I can't go like this," objected Tessie, looking scornfully at her black frock and touching her hair with her free hand. "I'm a fright!"

"You're an angel!" contradicted Mr. Bill.

Norah slipped behind Tessie, and with magic fingers touched the little knot at the back of Tessie's head. A miracle seemed to be performed before their eyes, for the old Tessie came back to them with the loosening of her yellow hair.

"Bless me!" murmured Mr. Kingley, as interested as he was surprised.

"It's easy for a girl to disguise herself with colored glasses and a new way of doing her hair," laughed Tessie. Her cheeks were as pink as they had been pale. "But shouldn't I go and put on some of my queen clothes?" she asked anxiously. She wished to appear at her best before her special representative.

The Amazing Inheritance

"You look like an angel as you are!" declared Mr. Bill again, and his voice shook. "Come along!"

A way opened through the crowd, and as Mr. Bill led the Queen away, there was a cheer. Another voice, actually Mr. Walker's voice, took up the shout, until the air was filled with, "Hurrah for Queen Teresa! Hurrah for the Queen!" The sound was music to Mr. Kingley. It was as if the Metropolitan Grand Opera company were there singing in his basement. He turned to Joe. He could afford to be magnanimous.

"Queens may be out of place in the world, Joe," he said complacently, "but the people still seem to like them!"

"Yes," remarked Joe with a grin, "people will always like a show." And he added, as if he were reading Mr. Kingley's inner thoughts, "This is another great day for the Evergreen, isn't it? You're coming with us, Mr. Kingley? Tessie will want everything cleared up now."

"Of course I'm coming!" Mr. Kingley was a bit testy. "I just want to speak to——"

"Mr. Gray?" suggested Joe with another grin.

"To send a message to Miss Gilfooly's grandmother," Mr. Kingley corrected with great dignity. "I think she should know that the queen has been found."

XXV

MR. BILL hurried Tessie through the crowd and to his car. They both thought of the day, over a month ago, when Tessie had learned that she was a queen, and Mr. Bill had taken her to Marvin, Phelps & Stokes. And now he was taking her to the lawyers' again. They smiled radiantly at each other. How blue the sky was! How bright the sunshine!

"My word!" exclaimed Mr. Bill from the very depths of his honest heart. "I'm glad I found you!"

"I'm glad, too," Tessie murmured shyly. "I made up my mind that I'd stay in the Evergreen basement until the special representative came and made the Sons of Sunshine behave themselves. I'm sorry you were worried," she said apologetically. Indeed she was sorry that Mr. Bill had been worried. The thought that Mr. Bill would worry about her sent a lump, that almost choked her, into her throat.

"Worried!" The word was inadequate to express what Mr. Bill had suffered. "Say," he said quickly, "when I heard you had been carried off I—I—Oh, hang it all!" The eager expression slipped from his face, and he drew back. "I wish

The Amazing Inheritance

you weren't a queen," he muttered discontentedly.

"What were you going to say?" asked Tessie eagerly. "Never mind the queen business. I want to hear what you were going to say."

Mr. Bill looked at her flushed little face and into her starry blue eyes, and he did not care a penny if she were a queen. She was the dearest, the sweetest, the loveliest girl in the world. She was Tessie! Tessie Gilfooly! He did not care a hang if she were also a queen. And he did not care another hang if they were there by the curb with the noon crowd moving up and down the sidewalk. He only remembered that Tessie was there beside him, within reach of his hand, and that all night he had been trying to find her, afraid for her. The words came in a great rush. He could not have kept one of them back to save his life. Tessie did not want him to keep them back—not one of them. Her ears were hungry to hear them all. She colored enchantingly.

"I'm crazy about you!" Mr. Bill said thickly. "And when you were kidnaped yesterday I nearly died! I would have died if you hadn't been found. I know I would! I never felt about a girl as I do about you. I—I don't feel complete unless you are with me. Oh, darn it! I wish you weren't a queen!" He remembered what she was, and looked at her helplessly, almost indignantly.

Tessie laughed softly, and the wild roses deep-

The Amazing Inheritance

ened in her cheeks. "I don't!" she said firmly. "If I hadn't been a queen, you never, never would have seen me! You never did see me until that day, and all the time I was crazy about you. The first day I went to the Evergreen was the first day you were there, and Mr. Walker took you around and showed you everything. I thought you were the most wonderful man in the world! But you never looked at me! You never saw me until I was a queen! I should say I was glad that Uncle Pete died and sent Ka-kee-ta to find me!" she finished breathlessly.

"You darling! You honey-girl!" Mr. Bill fought valiantly the impulse to take her in his arms and kiss her and kiss her right in the face of the moving noon throng. "And you really do like me?" He wanted to hear her say again that he was the most wonderful man in the world.

"I'm crazy about you!" Tessie repeated happily.

"My word!" He stared at her. "And I'm crazy about you! Can you believe it? I don't know how this is going to end," he said firmly, "but I know this much—I'm not going to give you up to any Sunshine Islands! You belong to me!" He held fast to what belonged to him and grinned.

"That's the wonderful part!" Tessie sighed with ecstasy, her heart beating so fast that she could scarcely find breath to go on. "That I

The Amazing Inheritance

belong to you, and you belong to me! I—I can't make it seem true! It's far more amazing than that I'm a queen!"

The word reminded them that they were on the way to meet the queen's special representative. They never would meet him if they remained in front of the Evergreen. Mr. Bill reluctantly touched a button, and they shot forward just as a man, a *Gazette* reporter, recognized Tessie. He raised a cheer.

"Oh!" Tessie looked back and waved her hand before she turned her glowing face to Mr. Bill. "Can you believe it? Isn't this the most wonderful world?"

Eventually they joined the others in Mr. Marvin's office. Not only were Joe, Norah, Bert and Mr. Kingley seated around Mr. Marvin's desk, but there was another man there, a big broad-shouldered man with a sunburned face, and beside him stood Ka-kee-ta, and clutched tight in Ka-kee-ta's right hand was the sleeve of Frederic Pracht. Mr. Pracht stood leaning against the wall, a cynical smile on his face.

As Tessie came in, all rosy apology, Ka-kee-ta gave a roar and rushed forward dragging Mr. Pracht with him, and whether he wanted to or not, Mr. Pracht had to make obeisance to the queen.

"Hang it all!" he muttered angrily. "Let me go!"

"Yes, Ka-kee-ta, let him go," ordered Mr.

The Amazing Inheritance

Marvin, as Tessie gave a little shriek when she saw who had been forced to bend before her.

But it was not until James Pitts uttered a few curt words in an unknown tongue that Ka-kee-ta released his prisoner. Mr. Pracht stumbled to his feet and withdrew to a corner, where he stood brushing his clothes with a hand that would shake. He knew very well that it would not be wise for him to take another step. He had gone as far as he could.

"Why, Ka-kee-ta!" Tessie patted her body-guard on the shoulder. "Where were you? I was so worried about you? And how did you find Mr. Pracht?"

"I think I can tell you that better than Ka-kee-ta," said Mr. Pitts, and he came forward to shake Tessie's little hand. "Glad to meet you," he said formally before he began his story. "I was on my way to Mr. Marvin's office yesterday when I met Ka-kee-ta in front of a candy store. I took him back to the Pioneer to ask him about things and detained him so late that I persuaded him to sleep on the floor of my room instead of returning to disturb you. He never would have left you for a moment if he had known that the Sons of Sunshine had threatened you. As for Pracht, he came to see me this morning to try and make a deal for the islands. He was there when Ka-kee-ta came back to tell me that Miss Gilfooly had disappeared. We suspected that

The Amazing Inheritance

Pracht knew something about the kidnaping, and Ka-kee-ta grabbed him. As long as no harm has been done and you are safe, I would suggest that Pracht be released. He is only the tool of a man who is known in the islands as the Shark. The Shark planned to make a fortune by selling the islands to Japan, and he organized the Sons of Sunshine to cause dissension among the people, and influence them to refuse to accept a white queen. He sent Pracht here to oppose you, and to get the Tear of God, which means everything to the islanders. No one could expect to influence them unless he had the Tear of God. But the Sons of Sunshine turned against the Shark. He was killed in the fight which liberated me, and without him, Pracht is harmless. He did not know of the Shark's death until I told him. Let him go," he advised curtly.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Mr. Kingley. "Before he goes, I want to know why he used my car to kidnap the queen?" And he glared at Mr. Pracht.

"Because Miss Gilfooly knew your car and would get into it when she was told," Mr. Pracht explained in a voice which was very different from the domineering tones he had used to Tessie. "We had expected to go to the hotel and ask her to come to Mrs. Kingley, but when we picked her up in the street, it was easy. We didn't hurt her!" he added hurriedly.

The Amazing Inheritance

"No, you didn't hurt her. You didn't dare!" Mr. Pitts told him coldly. "You can go!"

Mr. Pracht did not wait to hear another word. He was glad to go, and he slid out of the door like a brown-and-green snake.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Tessie, who was not at all sure that she liked to have Mr. Pitts issue orders and let a brown-and-green snake loose.

"His methods were clumsy," Mr. Pitts said flatly, "from the beginning when he stole the records from the Mifflin court house. And they were clumsy when he had his native servant ransack your house for the Tear of God. The fellow was knocked on the head by Ka-kee-ta who was prowling around to see you, Miss Gilfooly, and who was frightened at what he had done and ran away. It was clumsy of Pracht to think that he could steal the jewel from you at the Evergreen banquet, where he acted as a waiter. And clumsier still to threaten you as he did and to kidnap you. That must have been his servant at the window when you thought you saw Ka-kee-ta. Pracht should have used a little tact. Tact is far more necessary than force in negotiations of this sort." He looked at Tessie and nodded his head to assure her that he had no intention of using force. Tact was the weapon that he would always use.

There was a slight pause which Mr. Kingley

The Amazing Inheritance

broke with a cough. The cough might have been a signal for, as soon as he heard it, Mr. Marvin looked at Mr. Pitts.

"If you have brought information from the Sunshine Islands for Queen Teresa, you might give it to her now," he said. "We are all her friends." And he smiled at Her Majesty.

"Oh, yes!" breathed Queen Teresa on pins and needles to hear about the Sunshine Islands. She regarded her friends with shining eyes. They were friends to be very proud of, every one of them.

Mr. Pitts let his glance roam from one to another also, and his shaggy brows drew together until they made a black line above his keen penetrating eyes.

"I find," he began slowly, carefully weighing each word before he offered it to Tessie and her friends, "that you have no idea of what the Sunshine Islands actually are. You seem to regard them as you would England or any other European kingdom. Of course a king is a king, or in this case, I should say a queen is a queen, but there is a difference between a first-rate power and a group of Pacific islands. I understand from Ka-kee-ta that you have looked upon Miss Gilfooly as you would upon Queen Mary, for instance, and I am afraid that you have prepared her for nothing but disappointment."

Tessie's heart jumped into her mouth. Wasn't

The Amazing Inheritance

she a queen then, after all? Her face, which had been as pink as a rose, turned as white as the flower on Mr. Marvin's desk.

Joe Cary gave a low whistle. "I thought so!" he exclaimed, and he glared at Mr. Kingley.

No one paid any attention to him. Every one was too interested in Mr. Pitts and his words to have even a small portion of interest for whistling Joe Cary.

"I don't understand," went on Mr. Pitts even more carefully, "why you thought best to shower Miss Gilfooly with such royal honors and homage—just why you took that point of view—" he hesitated again.

"You tell us, Mr. Kingley," begged Joe. "You tell us how that mistake was made."

Mr. Kingley flushed and eyed Joe as if he wished that Joe were where he belonged—behind a drawing-board in the advertising department of the Evergreen—instead of in the office of Marvin, Phelps & Stokes, heckling the owner of the Evergreen.

"I happened to be with Mr. Marvin, when he received the papers from the Honolulu lawyer who brought Ka-kee-ta here," he said a little reluctantly, although the reluctance disappeared as he told his story. "They said that the King of the Sunshine Islands—I remember that the word king was distinctly used—had died and made the eldest child of his brother, John Gilfooly of

The Amazing Inheritance

Waloo, his heir. I knew that there was a Miss Gilfooly on the Evergreen pay roll. The name had been unusual enough to attract my attention. And it occurred to me if that Gilfooly should prove to be the heir, she would be a queen and we could obtain some mighty effective publicity for the Evergreen. Business had been dull, we were feeling the general depression, and we needed something to boost trade. Mr. Marvin has been my friend for many years, and he consented to let me use the information. I don't see yet that any harm has been done," he told Joe defiantly.

"I don't either," murmured Tessie, with a shy glance at Mr. Bill, who looked at her anything but shyly.

Mr. Kingley regarded Tessie with hearty approval before he went on. "Mr. Marvin's man located the eldest child of John Gilfooly in Miss Teresa Gilfooly, who sold aluminum in the Evergreen basement. We arranged to notify her of her good fortune while she was at work, and naturally I made the most of the story. And no one can say I haven't treated Miss Gilfooly like a queen!" He dared Joe to say it. "I confess that I used the romantic and dramatic events which followed to benefit the Evergreen, but any man would have done that if he was any kind of a business man at all. I even helped Miss Gilfooly raise a large fund for the poor children of the islands," he boasted.

The Amazing Inheritance

"There are no poor in the Sunshine Islands!" Mr. Pitts spoke indignantly. "Every one is rich and happy there, for people are rich and happy when they have all they want. They may not have much, but they have what they want, and I guess that is all any of us work for. I suppose this is a disappointment to you, Miss Gilfooly?" He turned to Tessie with kindly concern.

"No," she told him a little slowly. "It isn't exactly. You see, I know something about these Sons of Sunshine! and when I was kidnapped, I did a lot of thinking I hadn't had time to do before. I remembered what happens to kings and queens when the people don't want them. Joe Cary had told me all about that. I'm not sure I want to be a queen and perhaps some day find myself in boiling oil." She shuddered. "Mr. Pracht said that was what they do in the Sunshine Islands when they don't like their kings."

"It has been done," admitted Mr. Pitts, "but not lately. I think you are right. You wouldn't be happy in the Islands. According to their laws, a queen from another tribe, which is what you would be, must marry the most powerful man on the islands."

"Oh!" Tessie's eyes grew so big and round that there seemed to be nothing in her face but two big blue eyes. "I couldn't do that! I never could do that!" And she looked appealingly at Mr. Bill.

The Amazing Inheritance

"No, of course you couldn't. And you couldn't stay on the Islands twenty-four hours unless you did. Here is a shot I took at the man you would have to marry, if you remain the queen." He handed Tessie a photograph of a big strapping native, who looked enough like Ka-kec-ta to be his twin brother. He had the same frizzled hair, the same tattooed nose.

Tessie turned away from it with a shriek and a shudder. "I never could! Never!" she declared. "I couldn't ever marry any one but——"

"Mel" interrupted Mr. Bill proudly. Mr. Bill was immensely pleased with Mr. Pitts' report of the Sunshine Islands. It promised to remove many of the difficulties from the path which led to Tessie. "Perhaps this isn't the time to speak of it, but you might as well know that Miss Gilfooly is going to marry me some day soon."

There was a gasp and a gurgle from Mr. Kingley. He stumbled to his feet and stared at his son and then at his former employee. He was unable to utter one of the words which rushed to his lips. He could only stare at his son, and wonder what on earth his son's mother would say.

"Ye gods!" he heard Joe Cary explain. "Here is publicity! The Queen of the Sunshine Islands and the heir of the Evergreen! People will eat up such a story. You'll double your sales again, Mr. Kingley!"

Norah Lee looked at Joe, and then she looked

The Amazing Inheritance

at Tessie, and then back to Joe, as if she were surprised to hear him speak so lightly of Tessie marrying any one. Her face flushed suddenly, and she ran to Tessie and kissed her.

"I'm so glad," she whispered. "I knew Mr. Bill was crazy about you."

"And did you know I was crazy about Mr. Bill?" whispered Tessie, all aquiver with ecstasy. "Isn't he wonderful!"

"Old Bill stole a march on us," grumbled Bert Douglas. "He had you branded before the rest of us had a chance," he told Tessie discontentedly.

"I think you are very wise, Miss Gilfooly." Mr. Pitts seemed as pleased as any of the group. "You will be far happier as the wife of a young American than of Ti-ta there." He nodded toward the snapshot which lay face up on Mr. Marvin's desk.

"My goodness!" shivered Tessie. "I should think I would! But what will become of Kakee-ta if I marry Mr. Bill? I shan't want Kakee-ta around then."

"I'll take him and the Tear of God back to the islands," offered Mr. Pitts. "And I'll guarantee you a wedding present such as Waloo has never seen."

"And we'll exhibit it at the Evergreen!" Mr. Kingley did not care if Joe Cary did laugh. "People will want to see it."

The Amazing Inheritance

"Then I am to understand you will renounce your rights to the islands?" Mr. Pitts asked, so that he would know exactly what he was to understand. "I doubt if you really have any legal claim to them. I doubt if Pete Gilfooly had the right to leave them to any one. His private fortune, something over a hundred thousand——"

"A hundred thousand!" cried Mr. Kingley. "I thought it was millions!" He glared at Mr. Pitts as if he suspected that Mr. Pitts had secreted the millions.

"A hundred thousand," repeated Mr. Pitts firmly. "Money isn't worth what it was in the islands. It isn't worth what it was anywhere. Look at the German mark and the French franc! Look at the Russian ruble! Look at the American dollar! The Shark asked millions from the Japanese, but I told you what happened to him. No, Pete Gilfooly left a hundred thousand dollars, and they are safe in a Honolulu bank, subject to Miss Gilfooly's orders. That money was his, no matter how he made it, and he could leave it where he pleased. But the Sunshine Islands are different. And the Tear of God is different, too. Whether you have any right to it or not, you have possession of it, and the people want it back. They are prepared to pay a good price for it, because they believe that misfortune will come to the islands if it isn't brought back. They are child-

The Amazing Inheritance

ishly superstitious. Any one who has the Tear of God can influence them. That is why Pracht kidnaped Miss Gilfooly. But even if she has the Tear of God, Miss Gilfooly couldn't govern those islands. That's a man's job and it should be a Sunshine Islander's job. I think the offer is a fair one, and I can promise you that the islands will never become the property of any foreign power. They will remain in the possession of the people—an independent people!" he added impressively.

"He's right!" Joe Cary told Tessie eagerly. "You'll be a lot happier if you stop thinking any more about this queen business, and plan to settle down with Mr. Bill in a flat here in Waloo."

"I know," murmured Tessie, all aglow at the thought of a flat in Waloo with Mr. Bill. It would be heaven! And then, strangely enough, she had to remember what Mr. Kingley had said about the duties and responsibilities to which Providence had called her and Mr. Bill. Mr. Bill could look after his duties from a flat in Waloo, but what about her responsibilities? Could she put them aside, just because the Waloo flat would be heaven? The Sunshine Islands were hers. They had been left to her by her Uncle Pete. She didn't care what Mr. Pitts said. And anyway, Mr. Pitts sounded a lot like Mr. Pracht, they both wanted to take her islands from her. Perhaps there

The Amazing Inheritance

were moments when it was unpleasant to be a queen, but there were also moments when it was pleasant. And the islands were hers! The blood of the fighting Gilfoolys began to stir in her veins.

Mr. Pitts playing with the snapshot of Ti-ta turned it toward her. It gave her the horrors just to look at the pictured face. Oh, dear! She did want to continue to be a queen, but she did not want to pay the price for the honor, if Mr. Pitts was right about the price. But was he? Would she have to marry that horror to remain a queen? She looked at Mr. Pitts suspiciously. Mr. Pitts was supposed to be her representative—her special representative—but he talked as if he were the counsel for the islands. He did not seem to be thinking of her at all.

"Then I am to understand," Mr. Pitts said a second time, and in a most ingratiating manner, "that you will resign your claim to the Sunshine Islands?"

His insistence made him more than ever like the detestable Mr. Pracht. Tessie tossed her head indignantly. What was there about her islands that everybody should try to take them from her? Resign! She would not resign anything until she knew, and even when she knew, she would resign nothing until she was ready. She was a queen, and she would keep her kingdom until she was thoroughly ready to give it up. She didn't care what this horrid Mr. Pitts said or

The Amazing Inheritance

what Joe Cary said. And she would keep Mr. Bill, too! The fighting blood of the Gilfoolys was in full command, but before she could muster her indignant thoughts into orderly sentences, which would explain her decision, Mr. Kingley had something to say. Mr. Kingley seemed as opposed to Mr. Pitts as Tessie was.

"Not so fast! Not so fast!" he cautioned. "Kingdoms aren't resigned as easily nor as quickly as that. It doesn't seem wise to me, a business man, for Queen Teresa to give up her rights until she knows what they are. I should advise her to visit the Sunshine Islands before she decides to give them to any one."

"Oh!" Tessie was aghast. "I never could put my foot on them! I wouldn't dare!" And although she was a Gilfooly and therefore brave as a lion, she was inconsistent enough to look piteously at Mr. Bill. Surely he would not want her to visit islands inhabited by cannibals.

"You see!" murmured Mr. Pitts, with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

"I should further suggest," went on Mr. Kingley, who seemed full of helpful suggestions, "that, as the queen is to marry my son, the visit to the islands might be a feature of their wedding trip."

"Gosh!" muttered Joe Cary, visualizing the headlines which such a wedding trip would produce in every newspaper.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tessie, but it was a very dif-

The Amazing Inheritance

ferent "Oh!" from the one she had uttered before. What a wonderful man old Mr. Kingley was! With Mr. Bill beside her, she would not be afraid if all six islands were covered with cannibals. She looked at Mr. Bill, her face all pink dimples.

"Now that," exclaimed Mr. Bill enthusiastically, "is a real idea!" He caught Tessie's hand and squeezed it.

But Mr. Pitts shook his head. "You would never be allowed to land," he prophesied.

"Well," exclaimed Tessie stubbornly, "I'm not going to give up my islands until I've seen them!" Mr. Kingley's suggestion was proving more alluring to her every minute.

Mr. Pitts sighed and settled himself for a long argument. He took great pains to hold the picture of Ti-ta so that Tessie would have to look at the tattooed face.

Tessie turned away from it. "And if I'm married to Mr. Bill," her voice shook with ecstasy at the thought, "I couldn't marry that man!"

"The islands would never recognize your marriage to any man but Ti-ta," Mr. Pitts insisted. "You would have to marry him or resign your claims. I am sorry that you don't like my suggestion. It was made to help you. I know what the islands are. I know how Pete Gilfooly managed to hold them. They are no place for a white woman!" And he told them more about the islands, and the barbarous customs of the

The Amazing Inheritance

natives, whom Pete Gilfooly had never been able to civilize, even if he had built them a church and a moving-picture theater. He made Tessie's warm blood run cold, and even Mr. Kingley shook his head.

"Why they're nothing but savages!" Mr. Kingley exclaimed in disgust.

"That's what I have been telling you," Mr. Pitts said patiently. "They have no respect or consideration for women. Miss Gilfooly, even if she is the queen, would be only Ti-ta's slave. She would be just one of his wives!"

"I wouldn't!" cried Tessie, fiercely indignant at such a statement. "I wouldn't marry anybody ever but Mr. Bill! And if those Sunshine Island people don't want me to be their queen, why I don't owe them anything!" She had suddenly made an amazing discovery. "I haven't any obligation to them at all!" Of course she hadn't! Mr. Kingley could talk about the responsibilities Providence had given her if he wanted to, but even Mr. Kingley should see that she owed nothing to a people who refused to let her take the responsibilities. "I'm glad I had the islands, that I was their queen," she went on eagerly, "for they brought me and Mr. Bill together, but now that we are together, I don't want them! Not for a minute! I think they're horrid! I wouldn't live where men can have half-a-dozen wives!"

"But—" began Mr. Kingley feebly.

The Amazing Inheritance

He had never had anything to do with a royal abdication before, but he felt that this was not the way one should properly be managed. Surely there must be a system for such an affair.

Tessie stamped her foot. "Please, please don't make any more objections!" she begged. "If you were a girl, and had to choose between splendid Mr. Bill and that tattooed horror, you wouldn't hesitate a second, no matter how many kingdoms were thrown in with the native. I'd rather marry Mr. Bill than have a dozen kingdoms! I would!" she repeated defiantly. "I'm like Joe Cary," she even dared to say to purpling Mr. Kingley. "I've learned that women are of far more use to the world than queens."

"Good for you, Tess!" applauded Joe Cary.

"But—" Mr. Kingley began again ever more feebly.

"And anyway," went on Tessie, the words coming in an impetuous rush, "this is my kingdom, and if I want to give it back to the people I can! Can't I?" She appealed to Mr. Bill. "You would just as soon I wouldn't be a queen, wouldn't you?"

"I'd rather!" he told her honestly. "I'd a lot rather have you just little Tessie Gilfooly. I've told you more than once that I wished you weren't a queen."

Tessie drew a long breath and smiled radiantly at Mr. Bill. It pleased her enormously to hear

The Amazing Inheritance

that he liked her better as Tessie Gilfooly. But when she looked at Mr. Kingley she sighed. "I wish you did, too," she said wistfully. She could not be quite happy without Mr. Kingley's approval. "I wish you didn't want me to keep on being a queen."

Before Mr. Kingley could tell her how much better it was in his estimation for her to remain a queen, the door opened, and Mr. Phelps came in with a newspaper which he placed before Mr. Marvin.

"The noon edition of the *Gazette*," he explained importantly, and he looked curiously at Tessie. "I thought you should see this at once." And he pointed to an item in the upper left-hand corner of the folded sheet.

Mr. Marvin looked at the big headline. "Upon my word!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "A tidal wave has washed over the Sunshine Islands and destroyed two of them. Here is a dispatch from Honolulu that on the twenty-third of the month, a tidal wave swept over the Sunshine Islands and destroyed two of them!"

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed Mr. Bill, the first to find his voice, and he put his arm around Tessie and held her tight, as if to make sure that she would not be swept away from him.

"A tidal wave!" cried Tessie, and she looked almost suspiciously at Mr. Pitts, as if she suspected that he had had something to do with the

The Amazing Inheritance

tidal wave. "Do they have those on the islands, too?" There seemed to be no end to the disagreeable things that could happen on the Sunshine Islands.

"Occasionally," mumbled Mr. Pitts, as he snatched the paper from Mr. Marvin and read the dispatch himself. "There used to be twelve islands in the group, but six of them have been destroyed by tidal waves. The last was in 1853 when the smallest, Ki-yu-hi, was swept away. I must cable Honolulu!" And he hurried from the room, Ka-kee-ta at his heels.

Tessie turned to Mr. Kingley. "Just suppose we had gone there on our wedding trip, Mr. Bill and I, and we had been swept away by a tidal wave!" she said, her face white at the mere thought. "How would you feel then? I shouldn't think you would want us to have anything to do with such a place."

"Well, well," muttered Mr. Kingley, somewhat dazed by the calamity in the Pacific Ocean. "I'm glad your uncle's money was banked in Honolulu. I guess this Pitts is right and those islands aren't any place for a white woman," he admitted slowly.

"Then, that's settled!" Tessie reached forward and patted his hand. "I'm glad you agree with us at last. But isn't it awful to have two whole islands destroyed like that? It wasn't my fault, was it? Nobody can blame me, can they?"

The Amazing Inheritance

Even if I did have the Tear of God?" She snatched the royal jewel from her bag where she had tucked it when she came to the office, and threw it on the desk, as if it burned her fingers. "Do you suppose the islands were destroyed because Ka-kee-ta brought that to me? Do you suppose the people were right when they said misfortune would come to them if the Tear of God wasn't brought back?" Her face was quite white and her eyes full of awed fear. "I—I never want to see it again!" she gasped. "I think those islands are awful! If you aren't killed by savages, you're drowned by tidal waves!" She turned away from the royal pearl with horror.

"I'll take care of it for you," suggested Mr. Kingley, taking it in his hand. "I'll keep it in the store vault." He felt that something should be saved for Tessie from the wreck of her kingdom.

But Tessie shook her head. "I'll give it to Ka-kee-ta," she insisted, "and he can take it back to the islands, and maybe the rest of them will be saved; maybe then there won't be any more tidal waves."

"Sure, you can give it to Ka-kee-ta," Mr. Bill promised her. "I'll be glad to have him take it away from Waloo. I don't want him around, either. He'll be better off with Mr. Pitts. Mr. Pitts seems to understand natives. And some day I'll give you a string of real pearls."

The Amazing Inheritance

"That's what I'd like!" Tessie was tearfully grateful. "Oh, what will Granny say?" she exclaimed suddenly. "I must go and tell her about the tidal wave and everything!"

CHAPTER XXVI

“**A**RE you surprised?” Norah asked Joe as they went down in the elevator. She looked at Joe curiously, for there was a broad grin on Joe’s face, and a grin was not what Norah expected him to wear under the circumstances. She would have said that a sad and sorry countenance was more befitting the occasion. But Joe looked anything but sad and sorry. Indeed, he was so jubilant that Norah borrowed some of his triumphant satisfaction and smiled, too.

He hesitated. “No,” he said slowly, “I’m not surprised, although I don’t know whether you refer to Tessie’s engagement to Mr. Bill, or to Mr. Kingley’s successful publicity campaign or to the loss of two of the Sunshine Islands?”

“I meant Tessie’s engagement!” She was surprised that he did not understand which was the most important of the three events he mentioned. “I thought you were rather fond of our little queen, yourself,” she said with the frank interest which was Norah Lee. There was an odd little breathlessness in her voice as she asked the question, and she watched his face with eager eyes.

Joe laughed carelessly. “Our little queen!” He ironically repeated the phrase which had been

The Amazing Inheritance

so often on the lips of Mr. Kingley. "Of course I'm fond of her. She has been like a sister to me. And she used to make me furious, when she was so unhappy, because she couldn't have everything that Ethel Kingley had, and yet she never would do anything to boost herself. She wouldn't do anything but grumble to poor old Granny. I used to talk to her like a Dutch uncle, and a fat lot of good it did until this jolt came. Now she has had a chance to see that it isn't enough to be rich and powerful—to have things. Tessie knows now that it takes more than power and riches to make a girl happy."

"That's right," agreed Norah quickly, and now she looked as jubilant as Joe had looked. "A girl does have to have more than things. She has to have love. I never used to believe that, but I know now it's true. Isn't it romantic?" she hurried on, as Joe started to ask her how she knew about love now. "Mr. Bill and the queen who was once a shopgirl! And all the time she was a shopgirl, Mr. Bill never saw her. Not until she was a queen!" It almost seemed as if she blamed Mr. Bill for such poor eyesight in regard to shop-girls.

"More credit to him!" declared Joe warmly. "I've always thought it was fine in Bill that he never saw the girls who work in the store. If he had run around after Tessie, I would have known he was a bad egg, but now— You see, living at

The Amazing Inheritance

her house as I did, I felt as if she were a sister.' I don't mind telling you that there was a time when I might have cared for her more than a fellow does care for a sister, but when this queen business came up I found I didn't. It showed me the girl I really did care for. Want to hear about her?" He asked in a most friendly fashion, and with a pleased chuckle which made her look at him quickly. There was a flush on his face and a light in his eyes she had never seen there before. They made her almost afraid to hear about this girl Joe really cared for, but she nodded bravely.

"Of course!" And there was just as much friendliness in her voice as there had been in Joe's—no more and no less. But the color slipped from her cheeks and left them rather white, and there was a puzzled expression in her eyes. "Of course, I've discovered I'm old-fashioned enough to adore romance."

"This romance isn't finished yet," Joe told her. His voice was not as confident as it had been. It was just a bit husky and anxious. "The heroine worked in the Evergreen, too. She was in the advertising department, and she used to agree with old Kingley that everything was publicity that came to the store."

"In the advertising department!" interrupted Norah, and all the pretty color rushed back to her cheeks, and her eyes danced. "Do I know her?" she demanded. "I used to work in the adver-

The Amazing Inheritance

tising department of the Evergreen, too, you know."

"Sure you know her. You see her every day. I used to think my girl was all for business and getting on, that she considered ambition and success as the only things that counted. But since I've seen her trying to help an ignorant little girl, and being kind and sympathetic to an old woman, why I know she's got a heart so big that it can hold more than ambition and success. Oh, what's the use of beating about the bush? You know I mean you! I hope you care for me, but if you don't to-day you will to-morrow. I'm a persevering cuss, and I usually get what I want."

"And what do you want?" asked Norah, and the corners of her mouth danced with her eyes. She tried hard to look only politely interested, but she just succeeded in looking eager to have him put his want in plain words.

"You," he said bluntly, "Tessie's a kid. She'll never grow up. She'll be some one for Bill to pet and play with all of his life. But I don't want a plaything. I want a woman for my mate, a woman who will help me do my share of the world's work and will let me help her do her share. I want more than a wife. I want a comrade! How about it?" Casual as the words were, Joe's voice was not casual. It held a deep note which thrilled Norah through and through and made her put her hand quickly into his.

The Amazing Inheritance

"That's what counts," she whispered. "Understanding, comradeship. They mean as much as love, and when you have comradeship and love you are with the stars. We'll help each other," she promised with sweet solemnity.

"Here, what do you mean by holding up the traffic?" exclaimed Mr. Bill, who had remained behind with Tessie for a short consultation with Mr. Marvin, and who found them lingering flushed and important in the corridor. "Come on and help us tell Granny that her queen has abdicated."

"And Johnny, the Boy Scout," added Joe. "Johnny will take the news hard. He had great ideas about changing the cannibals into Scouts. He confided to me that just because there never had been a Scoutmaster as young as he is was no reason why there never would be one. It will take some tact to break the news to Johnny."

It took no tact at all to break it to Granny. She took off her glasses and looked at Tessie.

"My soul and body!" she murmured. "And you had to marry a man like Ka-kee-ta? I'm glad you said you wouldn't! And just imagine living where you could be drowned any minute! You did exactly right, Tessie! You'll be much safer and happier right here in Waloo, where we know what to expect." She was silent for a moment and then she added slowly, "the good Lord never forgets the Gilfoolys!"

The Amazing Inheritance

"Oh come, Granny," objected Joe. "Don't tell me you think the Lord destroyed two perfectly good islands, and nobody knows how many people, to keep Tessie Gilfooly from making a fool of herself!"

"They were savages, Joe," corrected Granny. "Poor, ignorant savages, not much more than animals, to look at Ka-kee-ta and hear him talk. I'm sorry for him, but I can't help feeling more comfortable about Tessie. And, when you think of all the troubles those poor natives might have had—famine and smallpox and revolution—I guess a tidal wave was easy for them. I haven't liked much I heard about that kingdom of yours after I got over being proud to think you were a queen, Tessie, and if you had to marry a tattooed black man to keep it, I think you did exactly right to give it back. I expect we'll be a lot happier without any thrones in the family. There won't be any more kidnaping, and I shan't have to stay dressed up all the time. We can take it easy again, thank the good Lord! And you're going to marry Mr. Bill, Tessie? Can you believe it? You're a good lad, aren't you, Mr. Bill?" She looked questioningly into Mr. Bill's radiant face.

He stammered something, and Granny nodded her head.

"Well, well," she said. "To think of little Tessie Gilfooly marrying the big Evergreen! That means more to me than to hear you were

The Amazing Inheritance

queen of a lot of cannibals, away off in the Pacific Ocean. We've seen the Evergreen and know what it is! But Ka-kee-ta and his ax weren't a good advertisement for the islands. Well, well, I wonder what Mrs. Scanlon'll say now! She's been snooping around all morning, wanting to know if we were back for good and saying she was glad her Lil was satisfied to be a good stenographer and didn't aim to be what she couldn't be. I wonder what she'll say when she hears you're going to marry the Evergreen! Well, well! I guess we'd all better have a cup of coffee and steady our nerves after what we been through. And, Tessie, you'd better change your dress. I like you to look like a queen so long's you got the clothes. This has been good for Tessie," she confided to the others as Tessie tore her hand from Mr. Bill, and obediently ran up the narrow stairs.

"It's good for any girl to think she is a queen for a while. And she don't have to be told she's queen of any cannibal islands, either. It's enough for a girl to know she's queen of a good man's heart."

"You are!" Granny caught Norah in a warm embrace. Granny did not seem at all surprised to hear what Norah was, but she did seem pleased.

"You see, the Lord has been good to the Carys as well as to the Gilfoolys," grinned Joe, and he put his arm around the two women.

The Amazing Inheritance

"Well, well!" Granny put Norah away so that she could look into her shining face. "All I can say is you're a lucky girl. Joe Cary's been a good friend, and he'll make a good husband. I know!" And she looked at Norah and then at Joe, as if indeed she did know.

"Not as good as Mr. Bill!" declared Tessie from the doorway. She was breathless with the haste she had made, but she looked more familiar to them now in her crepe frock than she had in the shabby black sateen. "Mr. Bill is going to make the best husband in the world!" she told Granny confidently, as she slipped her fingers into Mr. Bill's waiting hand.

"You darling!" exclaimed Mr. Bill chokingly, and he put out his arm and drew her closer. "You darling Tessie Gilfooly!" And he kissed her warm red lips.

Granny smiled at them and at Joe and Norah. "What a grand thing that would be," she said slowly, "if all the men would try to be the best husbands in the world, and all the girls would try to be the best wives in the world. I guess then we wouldn't have no divorces. H—sh! Is that Johnny in the pantry?" Her keen ears had caught the rattle of crockery. Who's going to tell him that some of the Sunshine Islands have been washed away by a tidal wave? Who's going to tell him that Tessie's given back her kingdom and now "the islands'll never have Boy Scouts?"



Novels for Cheerful Entertainment

GALUSHA THE MAGNIFICENT

By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of "Shavings," "The Portygee," etc.

The whole family will laugh over this deliciously humorous novel, that pictures the sunny side of small-town life, and contains love-making, a dash of mystery, an epidemic of spook-chasing—and laughable, lovable Galusha.

THESE YOUNG REBELS

By Frances R. Sterrett

Author of "Nancy Goes to Town," "Up the Road with Sally," etc.

A sprightly novel that hits off to perfection the present antagonism between the rebellious younger generation and their disapproving elders.

PLAY THE GAME

By Ruth Comfort Mitchell

A happy story about American young people. The appealing qualities of a brave young girl stand out in the strife between two young fellows, the one by fair the other by foul means, to win her.

IN BLESSED CYRUS

By Laura E. Richards

Author of "A Daughter of Jehu," etc.

The quaint, quiet village of Cyrus, with its whimsical villagers, is abruptly turned topsy-turvy by the arrival in its midst of an actress, distractingly feminine, Lila Laughter; and, at the same time, an epidemic of small-pox.

HELEN OF THE OLD HOUSE

By Harold Bell Wright

Wright's greatest novel, that presents the life of industry to-day, the laughter, the tears, the strivings of those who live about the smoky chimneys of an American industrial town.

NEW YORK

D. APPLETON & COMPANY

LONDON

1

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

